“Ready or not”:

The Implications of Kindergarten Readiness Assessment Data On Classroom Reading Instruction

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate School

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy in Education

By

Holly J. Hullinger-Sirken

Dissertation Advisor: Dr. Linda Martin

Ball State University

Muncie, Indiana

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APPROVED BY:

_____	_____
Dr. Linda Martin, Committee Chair	Date
_____	_____
Dr. Diane Bottomley, Department Representative	Date
_____	_____
Dr. Patricia Clark, Department Representative	Date
_____	_____
Dr. Jocelyn Bolin, Cognate Representative	Date
_____	_____
Dr. Eric Pierson, Cognate Representative	Date
_____	_____
Dr. Steven Avila, At-Large Member	Date
_____	_____
Dean of the Graduate School	Date

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine the screening measures used to assess students entering kindergarten in the state of Indiana. In addition, this study sought to determine how the data from these measures are used to inform classroom reading instruction. Eighty-nine schools participated in the study and sixty-two of those schools completed the entire survey, as they were amongst the schools that assess students upon entrance into kindergarten. The survey was sent a total of four times. General findings indicated that Indiana schools assess students inconsistently upon entrance into kindergarten, with variations existing in the administration procedures of screening measures and the type of screening measure. Schools who responded to this survey generally expressed dissatisfaction with current screening measures administered and the results gathered from these measures. In addition, schools who participated in this study reported the use of data to inform classroom instruction, but not all schools specified that reading instruction was informed by the data.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Context

Many legislative acts have impacted how students are evaluated prior to school entrance. Beginning with the 1983 *A Nation at Risk* report, attention turned toward the idea of school readiness (McWayne, Green, & Fantuzzo, 2009). Then, the *Goals 2000: Educate America Act* assured that all students would start school "ready to learn," therefore placing an emphasis on determining students' readiness for school. The *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (NCLB), inclusive of the Reading First component, initiated a large accountability factor on teachers and the success of their students. With an ever-growing emphasis on national and state-level assessments, there is an expectation that teachers and schools will provide more effective teaching practices that can be measured by standardized state tests. Testing to ensure quality classroom instruction for children begins formally in kindergarten. However, the assessments that are implemented in kindergarten often determine not only learning performance but also whether students are "ready" for kindergarten. Further there is a disparity on how and why the assessments are used. According to Prakash, West, and Denton (2003) the National Center for Education Statistics identified one-third of the states using statewide screening measures for incoming kindergarten students and also found that close to half of local districts assess kindergarten students' preacademic skills prior to entry into school. With the use of assessments also comes how readiness is defined for kindergarten-aged students.

According to the National Research Council (2001), school readiness was inclusive of social and emotional competence as well as physical development skills (i.e. motor development, physical well-being). These skills in tandem with preacademic skills of literacy and numeracy combined to provide an overall picture of school readiness leading to school success. Wood,

Powell, and Knight (2001) offer a similar yet slightly different perspective regarding the two components to "school success," of which they define separately. They first define "school success" as how a child will perform based upon ability on standardized assessments. The first component to this school success is "readiness," which "is a measure of cognitive behavior or academic growth only" (p. 8). The second component to this "school success" is "developmental readiness," which "looks at cognitive functioning and potential" (p. 8). The developmental readiness component also considers the child's overall physical, social, emotional and language development. With the strong emphasis that is placed upon a child's 'readiness' to enter kindergarten, children are under more pressure to prove that they are ready for kindergarten (Panter & Bracken, 2009).

Accountability rests upon parents and early childhood educators to instill these academic skills prior to kindergarten. Kim, Murdock, and Choi (2005) address that children's readiness for school is dependent upon their mastery of certain academic skills prior to entering kindergarten. This contrasts with prior beliefs that a readiness for school is based upon the child's developmental processes of other domains such as physical, social, or emotional growth and maturation. With these differences in mind, children enter formal schooling with variation amongst their achievement levels and growth trajectories, initiating an achievement gap from the beginning of entry into school (Curby, Kaufman, & Ponitz, 2009).

Not only did the NCLB Act of 2001 initiate a focus on accountability for general instruction, it also emphasized through the Reading First component of its legislation that curriculum and assessments within reading instruction should be based upon scientifically based reading research (Santi, York, Foorman & Francis, 2009). Reading instruction is one area in particular where achievement gaps upon entry into formal schooling exist. Curby, Kaufman, and

Ponitz (2009, p. 434) support early literacy development and preschool education as contributors to further reading proficiency. Evidence suggests that there is a growing emphasis on the skill level that kindergarten children bring to the first year of formal schooling, which is closely related to the national and state-level mandates that expect children to read proficiently by third grade (Rouse & Fantuzzo, 2006). Snow, Burns and Griffin (1998) found that children who enter school with early reading difficulties continue throughout the primary grades with limited early literacy skills. Stanovich (1986) identified such achievement gaps within reading as the *Matthew effect*. Stanovich's research regarding the *Matthew effect* found that early readers with a large base of knowledge pertaining to reading skills were able to increase their knowledge at a quicker rate (p. 22). Therefore, students who demonstrated strong reading skill knowledge initially in comparison to peers with less of a knowledge base began to outperform them as the years progressed. Marie Clay (1991) agrees that by the age of 8, some students have potentially three years of reading struggles behind them, thus the achievement gap between strong and struggling readers persists. From Stanovich, and Clay, research focused on the importance of early literacy skill knowledge.

Thus with the recent early literacy skills research in tandem with the new national and state-level mandates, kindergarten screening instruments are being evaluated to determine which instrument is most effective in predicting academic reading readiness for entry into the primary school years. Hooper, Roberts, Nelson, Zeisel, and Fannin (2010) found that narrative writing skills were also predicted through the assessments of core language abilities, prereading skills, and maternal education. Therefore, according to Hooper et al. (2010), not only do kindergarten assessments help to predict early reading success across the early elementary years, yet also other literacy skills such as writing can be predicted through such assessments. As a result, the

umbrella of kindergarten readiness that examines the whole child has now covered a specific area of interest within kindergarten screenings- early literacy skills. Many kindergarten screening instruments provide insight into the early literacy skills that children entering kindergarten may already possess and also still need to acquire. The data acquired from these screening instruments then provide insight to teachers regarding the skill levels of students entering kindergarten. This data is directly linked to the mandates driving scientifically-based reading research instruction.

Statement of the Problem

There has been substantial research done to investigate the reliability and validity of kindergarten screening measures, to determine which instruments provide the most accurate predictors of early academic skill success (Rathvon, 2004; Panter and Bracken, 2009). However, little research has investigated the use of the data and its implications for instruction once collected and analyzed. Aside from the lack of research available to support the implications of kindergarten screening measures' data within the classroom, there is also little evidence that schools are consistent with the screening instruments implemented. Not to mention, there is little consistency outlined amongst states and districts as to the purpose that kindergarten assessments serve, either for screening or for instruction. Though there are reliable and valid kindergarten screening measures available to determine early skill foundations, particularly in the field of reading, little is known as to how the results of these measures actually impact student learning within the classroom. According to Coyne and Harn (2006), "Assessment practices contribute to higher levels of reading achievement only when they answer important questions for teachers and schools and enable informed, data-based instructional decision making" (p. 33). Though the use of kindergarten screening measures are meant to link assessment to instruction, there is little

evidence to support how teachers use the data for day-to-day classroom instruction. Kim et al. (2010) address that the goal is for teachers to identify students with potential reading difficulties early on, and state, "If overall level of student performance at the beginning of the year plays a critical role in determining students' achievement at the end of the year or at a later time point, then teachers can primarily utilize assessment information at the beginning of the year to plan instruction" (p. 652). Therefore, the data's importance within classroom instruction is addressed, in that the use of data from beginning of the year assessments can provide information for instruction.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to identify early screening measures used in Indiana to assess students' readiness for kindergarten and to examine how Indiana kindergarten teachers utilize kindergarten-screening data to inform classroom reading instruction. In addition, this study will investigate the measures used to assess kindergarten early literacy skills upon entry into kindergarten and the consistency of their implementation amongst Indiana schools. The formal research questions are as follows below: (1) How do Indiana schools assess students entering kindergarten? (2)What screening measures are used in Indiana to determine early literacy skills upon entrance into kindergarten? (3) What information does the data from screening measures provide teachers at the initial entry into the kindergarten school year? (4) How do kindergarten teachers report using data from early reading screening instruments and assessment measures to inform classroom instruction within kindergarten classrooms?

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, these are the definitions of the terms that will be used: Reading Readiness- A point in time at which children are ready to read.

Emergent Literacy- Early literacy behaviors associated with how students engage with print prior to structured beginning reading instruction termed by Marie Clay in the 1970s.

Early Literacy- "The knowledge, skills and dispositions that precede learning to read and write in the primary grades (K-3)" (Roskos, Christie, &Richgels, 2003)

Screening- "Most effective method of ensuring that all children in need of remediation will be identified at the earliest possible point" (prior to school entry) (Rathvon, 2004).

Assessment- Monitoring student progress over time, throughout the entire school year

Significance of the Study

This study will contribute positively to the importance of how data can be used to determine instruction, based on readiness screenings for formal school entry. This is important for classroom teachers and administrators to use when designing instructional methods in teaching reading. With the new implementation of Indiana IREAD3:2010, ensuring that all students read proficiently by third grade, it is important for teachers to use early assessment data to determine instruction. Through the use of this data, teachers can teach to the individual needs of children and work towards closing the existing achievement gap among readers.

Assumptions of the Study

There are two assumptions to this study: The school (administrators with assistance from kindergarten teachers) will provide accurate information regarding screening measures, and Teachers will honestly indicate how data from the screening measures are used.

Summary

Many assessment measures are used to determine a student's preparedness to enter kindergarten, in terms of their reading abilities. These assessment measures are often reliable and valid measures that have been identified as strong predictors of children's later reading success.

The data from these measures can provide a teacher with instructional goals and these connections between assessment data and instruction are necessary to develop strong, successful readers. However, we know little about how these instruments/assessments are being used and whether or not, in fact, they provide teachers with information upon which to base reading instruction.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

Determining how children learn and when they are ready for formal schooling has long been an interest of researchers and theorists, as well as the best practices for meaningful classroom instruction. As a result, the purpose of this study is to examine Indiana kindergarten screening measures used to assess kindergarten early literacy skills and the consistency of their implementation amongst Indiana schools. This study will contribute positively to the importance of how data can be used to determine instruction, based upon readiness screenings for formal school entry. Additionally, this study will seek answers to how the data provided from the kindergarten screening measures informs reading instruction within the classroom. The chapter will begin with a description of theory and research that illustrates the evolution of how readiness-screening measures have evolved and the newfound importance of determining reading acquisition and reading difficulties in early readers using early reading screening measures.

Kindergarten Readiness

Then and Now: History to Present

Long has there been an interest in how prepared children are upon beginning formal schooling. Readiness tests such as the *Metropolitan Readiness Tests* (1933) and the *Gates Reading Readiness Tests* (1939) were some of the first screening measures that were important in determining the readiness and achievement levels of students prior to first grade (Morrow and Smith, 1990). In the 1930's and 1940's, based upon Gesell and Morphett and Washburne's mental age of 6.5 as the necessary age to start learning, these tests were administered to determine first-grade readiness. Initial readiness tests were designed to identify strengths and weaknesses of students (Morrow and Smith, 1990). It was common practice even in the 1930s to assess students upon entrance into school with the same goals in mind as today, but the results of

the assessments didn't materialize for instruction. In addition, the tests administered were general readiness tests and often results were over-generalized to a specific subject area, such as reading (Morrow and Smith, 1990). As these authors further explain, "Schools tended to use total scores as indicators of overall readiness for reading instruction; as a result, many children were simply labeled as ready or not ready without any indication of what could be done to help those who were not ready for reading instruction" (p. 10).

Furthermore, major events in history, such as the launching of *Sputnik*, also affected the implementation of readiness assessments. The United States felt an even greater pressure to provide quality education to all students in the education system and therefore found readiness tests to be of great importance. Readiness tests, such as the *Metropolitan Readiness Tests* (1964; 1966; 1969) included subtests of vocabulary, visual and auditory discrimination, and copying (Morrow and Smith, 1990). Additionally, with the emergent literacy movement's evolution, these tests no longer determined readiness for first grade; the focus shifted to kindergarten children.

As time evolved into the late 1960s and onward into the 1980s, much research focused around the idea of beginning reading. As a result, many of the components of visual and auditory discrimination, as well as phoneme identification subtests, were undeniably more important. Scholars such as Durkin, Clay, and Bruner began extensive research in regards to readiness tests, with a focus toward the assessment of beginning reading behaviors. These scholars' foci regarding emergent (the term for beginning reading at their time of research) literacy, as termed by Marie Clay, in combination with reading-focused standardized assessments, has continued in schools today.

Emergent literacy and the approach to beginning reading initiated a focus regarding children's reading skills and reading achievement in the initial years of formal schooling, kindergarten and first grade. In addition, legislation such as the NCLB Act of 2001 emphasized an importance on reading skills prior to school entrance. Therefore, teachers face an increased accountability for students' reading progress, which has led to an emphasis on current readiness assessments devoted to assessing children's reading skills and less on an overall readiness for school. Because of this shift from general readiness to a focus specifically within reading, kindergarten readiness assessments are no longer administered with the purpose of determining whether students are "ready" for school (Morrow and Smith, 1990). With the growing emphasis on reading proficiency in the state of Indiana and the corresponding legislative mandates (IREAD-3, 2011), students' early reading skills have become the essential goal of "readiness" as students enter school.

Connection with a Focus on Literacy Preparedness

Students' reading proficiency, as stated in Indiana Public Law 109, which "requires the evaluation of reading skills for students who are in grade three beginning in the Spring of 2012 to ensure that all students can read proficiently before moving on to grade four," (IREAD-3, 2011) has initiated a greater importance on early reading instruction prior to grade three. With this new legislation, early reading screenings and preventative measures to early reading difficulties have become staples within reading instruction. As Rathvon (2004) describes, there are two categories for early reading assessments, early reading screening and early reading diagnostic assessments. *Early reading screening* measures "identify which students are at risk for reading failure and require intervention so that they do not fall behind their peers" (p.12). *Early reading diagnostic assessments* "are typically administered after children have been

identified as at risk for reading problems through some kind of screening process, but they may also be administered to children who have failed to respond to interventions after a specific period of time" (p. 13).

Though it is evident that early reading assessment is necessary in determining early readers' literacy skills upon entrance into school, Rathvon addresses an issue associated with readiness and reading assessments. Many of the general readiness assessments, such as the *Metropolitan Readiness Tests*, do not provide direct information regarding reading acquisition and reading difficulty. Rathvon describes weaknesses associated with traditional screening tests as lacking specific information that addresses the difficulties of young readers. Traditional screening tests are general readiness assessments, of which the focus is neither directly math nor reading. Because other domains of development are represented within traditional screening batteries, Rathvon argues that it is difficult to generalize poor performance on one of these screening batteries exclusive to reading failure. A study by the Indiana Institute on Disability and Community at Indiana University (2006) found that survey participants reported using screening measures that represented the whole child, rather than a specific subject area (i.e., reading). Standardized and informal assessments were used in this study to evaluate kindergarten readiness before entrance into school and results from this study indicated that these kindergartners' *readiness* for school didn't provide teachers with explicit data for instructional use.

Kindergarten readiness, as evidenced in the Indiana University study, has generally revolved around the preparation of the whole child entering kindergarten. Readiness for kindergarten in the past has been less specific to reading and more concerned with all the domains of development. However, with all of the current legislative mandates, readiness for kindergarten has transpired to how well prepared children are to begin reading at entry into

school (kindergarten). These mandates have changed the way teachers are to view what readiness means for children entering kindergarten.

Morrow and Smith (1990) agree that the term *readiness* took on new meaning with the advancement of beginning reading research, with *readiness* constituting the evolution of a child becoming a reader. According to Rathvon (2004), research regarding reading acquisition and reading disabilities has lent way to more specific determinants predicting early reading difficulties in young readers entering into the primary grades. Thus, reading assessments have now taken on a preventative role in preparing young readers rather than a reactive role to struggling readers within the classroom. According to Rathvon (2004), reading assessment development has been provoked by the acknowledgement of low-level reading proficiency in American students, as well as legislative acts such as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, inclusive of the Reading First initiative. Therefore, in order to accurately identify reading difficulties in young readers, screening measures administered to early readers should be designed to specifically assess predictive variables associated with reading acquisition. To better understand how students acquire literacy skills and the history behind reading readiness, it is important to review the historical landscape that contributed to the evolution of early reading.

Reading Readiness

History to Today

A readiness to read has evolved over time just as the initial ideas of overall readiness assessments. According to Smith (2002) reading readiness was an idea that was considered almost two centuries prior to its outright recognition in the 1920s. Prior to the 1920s, Plato and Aristotle's *Mental Discipline Theory* and *Associationism* theories began to build a foundation for educational theory and research. *The Mental Discipline Theory* stated that the brain should be

exercised regularly to strengthen learning faculties within the mind (Tracey & Morrow, 2006, p. 16). *Associationism* referred to how ideas are connected within the mind to form learning processes (Tracey & Morrow, 2006, p. 17). Both of these theories led to John Locke's challenge against *The Mental Discipline Theory* with his own *Tabula Rasa-"Blank Tablet" Theory*, which offered that children's minds were blank slates. Locke's theory contradicted *The Mental Discipline Theory* in that he believed that people were not born with innate knowledge, thus they were empty vessels waiting to be filled (Tracey & Morrow, 2006, p. 18). Locke's theory was regarded as an "associationist" perspective, leading to future research regarding mental connections and the process of learning. Locke's research led to many new theories that would soon implicate for the concept of reading readiness.

In the 1920s, theorists such as Rousseau, Pestalozzi, and Froebel offered glimpses into the readiness concept through their *Unfoldment Theories*, suggesting that children's learning would evolve from innate curiosity (Tracey & Morrow, 2006, p. 20). Froebel (1899), to whom the word *kindergarten,* meaning children's garden is attributed, advocated that the adult educator was responsible for a child's natural unfolding of learning. However, it was John Dewey in the 20th century who offered a clear concept of reading readiness. Dewey believed that readiness constituted philosophies that children should not be taught to read until age eight (Smith 2002). Based on Dewey's reading readiness beliefs, schools began to implement a 'wait' mentality. In 1926, the International Kindergarten Union along with the United States Bureau of Education investigated children's readiness for reading instruction upon entering first grade and discovered that there were related widespread issues regarding this topic, thus gaining recognition in American schools (Smith 2002).

Also developing in the early 1900s was behaviorism. Edward L. Thorndike established the theory of *Connectionism* and proposed four laws within this theory. One important law that he developed and which later reinforced the reading readiness foundation was the *Law of Readiness*. The *Law of Readiness* served as the background for readiness tests. Readiness tests later became an important component of determining children's readiness for reading.

By the 1920's, constructivism became the cornerstone for children's learning, as Dewey proposed that children learn through inquiry, a problem-based learning approach to acquire new knowledge. According to Tracey and Morrow (2006) his *inquiry learning* philosophy was based upon Pestalozzi, Rousseau, and Froebel's *Unfoldment Theory*, but further acknowledged the role of the teacher, student growth and the learning environment. Further research by scholars such as Piaget occurred during the 1930's, focusing on the cognitive development of young children. Though Piaget's work is attributed to both constructivist and developmental theory, he was known as a developmental theorist.

Piaget investigated children's' quality of thinking over time (Piaget & Inhelder, 1969), which later became known as his *Theory of Cognitive Development*. Cognitive development encompasses the basic units of structured knowledge that one acquires as he/she develops. It is with these units of knowledge that one can begin to solve problems, devise strategies and understand concepts. (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000). Within this theory, Piaget identified stages of cognitive development: sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operational, and formal operational periods (Piaget & Inhelder, 1969). Each of these stages represented different points on children's cognitive development continuum. With these ideas in mind, Piaget was considered a constructivist, believing that children construct their own knowledge through the exploration of their environment. Though Piaget was not a direct contributor to the reading readiness concept,

his ideas and theories proved to coincide with aspects of a child's readiness to read. He developed stages of cognitive development, which began to present the child with attributes that would systematically prepare the child for learning and development.

About the same time that Piaget was building his cognitive development theory, *Maturation Theory* came into perspective. Morphett and Washburne (1931), in addition to Arnold Gesell, were greatly influencing the idea of maturation. Gesell (1940) and other supporters of the Maturation Theory believed in a ripening viewpoint, where the brain had to be developed in order for students to be reading ready and, according to Gesell, students who were taught to read before a mature age would result in problems with achievement. Teale and Sulzby (1986) explain Gesell's ripening theory as a natural unfolding of the brain's mental processes over time. Gesell's neural ripening viewpoint of an innate readiness for the brain to process text came during a time when an emphasis was placed upon standardized reading tests and modern basals.

Scholars such as William S. Gray and Arthur I. Gates became leaders in remedial reading and standardized reading tests, but still viewed reading with a wait mentality. The remedial reading was implemented upon determining a reader's deficits. Reading ability was still viewed an innate intelligence. Gesell, along with other scholars, contributed to a study by Mabel Morphett and Carleton Washburne in 1931, which examined children's mental ages and reading achievement. The study compared at what age students were mentally ready to read based upon their reading achievement. The results of their study showed that students should not be taught to read until reaching a mature age of 6 years and 6 months. Thus, this theory and research advocated that formal reading instruction should not be implemented until age six and half. Throughout the 1930's into the 1950's, *Maturation Theory* held strong within literacy education

of American students. As a result, the "postpone and wait" (Teale and Sulzby 1986, x) belief stood its ground.

Not only did Morphett and Washburne's study, in conjunction with Gesell's work, create an age at which reading instruction would begin, but it also initiated reading readiness tests. These tests evolved from a variety of subtests inclusive of some reading subtests to tests primarily consisting of reading subtests. Many of these tests, such as the Metropolitan Readiness Tests, were published and still exist in some form today (Teale & Sulzby 1986, x). As Teale and Sulzby (1986) explain, these tests did not provide one score of reading readiness but instead consisted of individual subtests. According to Teale and Sulzby (1986, x), there were multiple subtests such as vocabulary, number, perceptions, information and drawing. Similarly, the Betts Ready to Read Tests contained subtests to determine a child's readiness to read. These subtests were auditory, visual, and perception subtests (Teale & Sulzby 1986, xi). Though these tests measured some aspects of reading readiness, they also assessed other areas of development. However, it began to appear as though these diagnostic assessments would be used to prepare students weak in a specific area (Teale & Sulzby 1986, xi), as determined by each subtest.

Reading readiness tests were one step toward the change that was due to come. The Metropolitan Readiness Tests-6th Edition (MRT-6) was a reading readiness test used to determine reading readiness of kindergarten children. This was an evolution of initial readiness tests that included some reading subtests but still contained subtests measuring other aspects of development (i.e. numbers). Panter and Bracken (2009) found that the MRT-6 provided standardized data of kindergarten students' readiness for first grade, thus linking readiness and reading achievement. These reading readiness tests that birthed from *The Maturation Theory* era are still used currently to determine children's' reading abilities. In addition to general readiness

tests, early childhood and kindergarten are now known as the times to prepare children for a readiness to read. Teale and Sulzby (1986) say it best, "As the reading readiness test and reading readiness workbooks became more and more established parts of the first year of school, the overriding emphasis on maturation diminished. The stage was set for the move that was to come" (p. xi).

A shift toward a nurture approach rather than a focus entirely on innate readiness evolved in the 1950's and 1960's. Rather than waiting for a neural ripening moment when children were ready to read, an opposite approach of integrating reading readiness programs in kindergarten began its implementation (Teale & Sulzby 1986, xiii). Scholars began to negate the linear reading readiness belief that had been steadfast throughout history. A non-linear frame of mind began to encompass reading scholars as well as pave the way for Marie Clay's work, which would change literacy education as well as instruction of teaching young children to read. Clay (1991) introduced the concept that young children, by the age of 5, were ready to read and could exhibit reading behaviors. From Clay's longitudinal studies in New Zealand, she examined students' reading and writing behaviors at ages 5:0 (5 years, 0 months) through 6:11 (6 years, 11 months). Further observations were made at 7:0 (7 years, 0 months) and 8:0 (8 years, 0 months). Clay examined children amongst four language backgrounds of four age groups (5:0; 5:6; 6:0; 6:6) in her second study in 1967. From these studies, Clay found that students exhibited early reading behaviours at the early age of 5 and continued throughout the following ages, dependent upon exposure to literacy. The studies also revealed that students entering school at the same time responded to the demands of school differently, according to the existing literacy knowledge students brought with them (Clay, 1991). By the 1970's, Clay developed the term "emergent literacy" over "prereading" or "reading readiness," due to her studies that young

children can display reading behaviors younger than age 6. Tracey and Morrow (2006, 85) state that Marie Clay's emergent literacy referred to children's' level of reading performance rather than an exact age at which they are able to read. Emergent literacy also encompasses children's' experiences with language and print from birth in regards to their development of early literacy skills. Similarly, Ollila and Mayfield (1992) believe *emerging literacy* includes the child's "natural, gradual development" (p. 1) of literacy domains.

Dolores Durkin was another scholar who studied early readers and the nurture approach to a readiness to read. Durkin's contributions to literacy came at a crucial time in the history of reading. As the concept of reading readiness began in its early stages, children were entering first grade at age 6. Durkin's first study (1966) selected early readers to participate in a study whom were identified as children who could identify 18 of 37 words from a vocabulary list as well as had not received prior school reading instruction. The sample of 49 children was from varying socioeconomic backgrounds as well as races. For reading achievement, in the first study, the children were administered Gates Reading Tests (1958 edition). When looking at the data regarding reading progress of early readers over a six-year time frame, children who learned to read at home, did not seem to have reading difficulties once they engaged in formal school instruction. In support of at-home reading, Durkin (1966) states, "When families of the early readers were interviewed, it became clear that none of the subjects learned to read early all by himself. What also became apparent was the wonderful productivity of a young child's questions- when they got answers- and, too, the large amount of achievement that can result from a small amount of informal help at home" (p. 26). Durkin's major contribution to reading rests in her extensive longitudinal studies, those concerning reading readiness. In these studies, she found that children, who were interested in reading and therefore sought exposure at home, had

greater reading achievement than non-early readers. However, she also provided great insight into phonics and the teaching of reading for classroom teachers. Durkin thought reading was not solely a word recognition approach, which led to a greater language-arts approach of reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

Around the same time, Yetta Goodman studied at-risk first graders and determined that even young readers had an understanding of print purposes within a text as well as an understanding of how to hold a book (Goodman & Goodman, 1979). Thus, Goodman examined younger children's reading behaviors, realizing that Dolores Durkin had already studied early readers. Goodman's work built off Durkin and Clay's, thus she began to focus her studies on the impact of environmental print and its implications for early readers. Goodman's studies (Goodman & Goodman 1979) found that students learned to read based upon exposure to language in familiar contexts, which then shifted to an ability to read print within language contexts. At last, the focus shifted toward an approach to begin literacy instruction at a younger age, to immerse young readers in a print-rich environment, and to prepare early readers for the developmental reading processes. Goodman and Durkin both were scholars who believed that a nurture approach was best for young children learning to read, opposite of the blank slate theory that Locke presented.

Researchers and scholars presently have continued the early literacy theories that Clay, Durkin, and Goodman's nurture approach proposed. Today's kindergarten and first-grade children's literacy skills are assessed early, which has been influenced by the readiness assessment era of the 1950's, as well as the contributions of Marie Clay, Dolores Durkin, and Yetta Goodman's studies of young readers. According to Coyne and Harn (2006), assessment of young readers' literacy skills allows teachers to improve instruction for incoming students, as

these early reading skills serve as the foundation for later reading skills and strategies. What once was a 'wait until the child is ready' mentality has changed to today's assessments to intervene with children who may need additional literacy support upon entrance to kindergarten and first grade.

Recent Views on Early Reading

With all of the new policies and mandates that have driven literacy assessment as priority within Kindergarten entry screenings, it is important to understand how reading readiness has evolved to today's definitions. Aside from Clay's coining of the term "emergent literacy" in 1970, two more current publications have contributed to the shift from emergent literacy to early literacy (a term we use today). The more current publications stressed the importance of early literacy assessments in conjunction with general kindergarten readiness assessments, with regard to emergent literacy development of young children. *Learning to Read and Write: Developmentally Appropriate Practices for Young Children,* a joint statement by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the International Reading Association (IRA) (1998), as well as *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children* (Snow, Burns, & Griffin et. al, 1998) both emphasized the importance of early literacy development with regard to later school outcomes. Therefore, not only was attention given to how students acquired early literacy skills but also how those skills contributed to their later school achievement. Therefore, the previous terms of "reading readiness" and "emergent literacy" were replaced with "early literacy", as the focus shifted to early literacy learning (Roskos et. al 2003).

More specifically defined, Roskos, Christie, & Richges et al. (2003) identify three categories within early literacy: oral language comprehension, phonological awareness, and print knowledge. These are the foundational components that link oral language and concepts of print

together in early readers and writers. Irwin, Moore, Tornatore, & Fowler et al. (2012) agree that alphabet knowledge, concepts about print and phonological awareness are important in the early literacy development of young children. Irwin et al.'s awareness of expressive vocabulary relates to a recent report by the National Early Literacy Reading Panel report of 2009, which discussed that rapid automatic naming of objects, colors, and other vocabulary had moderate correlations in predicting later literacy achievement.

Policy and Mandates Influence on Early Reading

Early literacy and its evolution over time has become a focal point in today's classrooms. Legislation such as *Goals 2000: Educate America* Act and the *No Child Left Behind Act of* 2001 both greatly influenced young readers as they entered school. *Goals 2000: Educate America* Act emphasized that students would enter school ready to learn. This legislation, along with scholars such as Clay and Durkin who supported early reading abilities of young children, encouraged reading instruction at the start of kindergarten. Furthermore, the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB) of 2001 not only expected that students would learn from the start of kindergarten but also that they would be proficient by the end of the school year (hence, 'no child left behind). With this new policy in place, a greater reason for rich early literacy instruction and quality print experiences were essential to early reading instruction. As Irwin et al. (2012) describe, rich literacy instruction is necessary to reduce the Matthew effect, in that strong readers remain strong readers and struggling readers continue to struggle, thus the achievement gap increases (Stanovich, 1986). Stanovich describes the Matthew effect when stating, "The very children who are reading well and who have good vocabularies will read more, learn more word meanings, and hence read better. Children with inadequate vocabularies-who read slowly and without enjoyment- read less, and as a result have slower development of vocabulary knowledge, which

inhibits further growth in reading ability" (p. 22). With quality reading instruction based upon scientific, best practice reading research, teachers can accommodate struggling readers.

These policies and mandates are present in our state of Indiana, in addition to the current legislation that children are expected to be proficient in reading by third grade (IREAD-3, 2011). Therefore, it is even more imperative that students entering kindergarten are accurately assessed and provided with rich instruction that will help them to become proficient readers, thus narrowing the achievement gap. It is also clear that assessments are administered within kindergarten readiness screenings that measure students' early literacy skills, but little information is provided as to how the data informs instruction. Hence, schools and teachers recognize that it is necessary to assess early literacy skills upon entrance to kindergarten, but the use of the data to advance these skillsets is lacking. Furthermore, reading assessments are just one component of general kindergarten readiness testing. Depending upon the type of screening measure administered, assessment of early literacy skills may or may not be the focus of the assessment. Therefore, not only is there a lack of research regarding the use of data for classroom instruction but there is also a lack of consistency amongst kindergarten screening instruments. As Thurlow and Gilman explain (1999), there is great variability in the assessment practices available and a lack of consistency amongst the various measures used.

Purpose of Kindergarten Screenings

Many schools describe kindergarten entry assessments as screenings, which according to Invernizzi et al. (2010), screenings are more than just weaning children out who don't meet expected trajectories, rather they can be used to modify instruction as a way to better accommodate individual students' needs. Costenbader et al. (2000) address the purpose of kindergarten assessments as instruments used to screen children's skills or developmental

processes. These authors also address the variation of screening procedures from school district to school district. Dependent upon the goals of the district when attaining the screening data, determines which assessment they are likely to use. In Indiana with the recent IREAD-3 legislation (IREAD-3, 2011), many schools may be more likely to utilize screening measures that focus on reading skills rather than developmental/process oriented skills. According to Samuels (2013), kindergarten evaluations should assess children's knowledge at the time of assessment, as well as the child's ability to acquire new learning.

In addition to commercial measures used to assess kindergarten skills upon entrance into school, some schools use teacher-created, non-commercial measures to assess kindergarten students. This creates great variation of which kindergarten screening measures are administered and the purpose behind their administration, per each school in Indiana. According to Samuels (2013), observational assessments allow teachers to gather information about preliteracy and other learning to compile information on each student. This information obtained can then be used to further reduce the achievement gap amongst students. Specific to reading, Samuels (2013) furthers that states involved in the Department of Education's Early Learning Challenge may receive grants that will benefit their assessment of kindergarten students. In order to expand and improve kindergarten assessments, funding is necessary to support these initiatives. Many of the current measures used amongst states are expensive and time-consuming.

Costenbader et al. (2000) emphasize district screenings are an investment of time for teachers and staff and state, "since schools are investing substantial staff resources on screening, it is important that the information gathered be valid, reliable, and useful in educational planning for children" (p. 330). These authors also address the issue that many schools are using psychometric measures that are outdated or not psychometrically valid, such as Gessell (1972) as

well as the K-1 Brigance Screen, which they believe are not strong predictors of academic school success. Many other researchers (Coyne and Harn, 2006; Goffreda, Diperna, & Pedersen, 2009; Invernizzi et al., 2010; McCoach, O'Connell, Reis, & Levitt, 2006; Missall, Reschly, Vets, McConnell, Heistad, Pickart, Sheran, & Matron et al., 2007; Rouse and Fantuzzo, 2006) agree that screening data has utility when used to inform classroom instruction and narrow the gap between proficient and struggling readers. However a lack of evidence for data-informed instruction exists. Additionally, many of the screening measures are not entirely focused on reading assessment, which we know to be the current focal point in today's schools, based upon our national and state legislation. To better understand how reading skills are assessed upon entrance into kindergarten, it is necessary to investigate screening measures that are specific to reading.

Literature Review of Reading Screening Measures

As Chatterji (2006) discusses, there is a focus specific to Reading, in regards to closing the achievement gaps between struggling and proficient readers, as a result of the NCLB Act. Therefore many school districts adopt a form of assessment to determine students' reading abilities upon entrance into kindergarten.

Kindergarten screening measures vary amongst school districts. However, the purpose behind administration of screening measures is not clear because some seek to assess student skill proficiencies, where others identify students at need for special services. A study by Panter and Bracken (2009) found that administration of the Bracken School Readiness Assessment (BSRA) in conjunction with the Metropolitan Readiness Tests, 6th Edition (MRT-6) provided useful information in predicting student outcomes. Other researchers Wood, Powell, and Knight (2001) found the Gesell School Readiness Test (1965) to be equally effective in predicting

student success in kindergarten. Though there are reliable and valid screening measures to predict student achievement, there are also various measures specific to reading.

VanDerHeyden, Witt, Naquin, & Noell (2001) found that curriculum-based measurement (CBM) probes are effective in identifying students with reading skill deficits. These researchers believed that CBM probes were a more effective way to evaluate reading deficits in struggling students, because the probes can be administered in the natural classroom setting and provide useful information for the classroom teacher. This is in contrast to screening measures that are generally given out of context and lack subsequent follow-up. Missall et al. (2007) assessed preschool children using the Early Literacy Growth and Development Indicators (EL-IGDI) to determine their predictive reading success as they entered into kindergarten. These curriculum-based measures were used for the same purposes as VanDerHeyden et al. (2001) yet Missall et al. (2007) found it necessary to start assessing at preschool age. Missal et al. (2007) emphasize the importance of assessing prior to preschool to screen and monitor students' literacy skills, identifying those who may be at risk for reading difficulties. Therefore, CBM seem to be effective assessments in predicting reading success of students before entry into school. Aside from CBM probes, other instruments specific to reading are also used to assess early literacy skills.

Rouse and Fantuzzo (2006) found that The Test of Early Reading Ability, third edition (TERA-3), which is a standardized assessment measuring reading ability of children ages 3.5 to 8.5, has concurrent, convergent validity with the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) assessment. DIBELS is a measurement that is specific to the area of Reading. DIBELS assessments align with the National Reading Panel's early literacy domains measuring phonological awareness, alphabetic print knowledge and language development (Rouse and

Fantuzzo 2006). According to Kim, Petscher, Schatschneider, and Foorman (2010), these tests allow for identification of students at-risk for reading difficulties, thus student who may need intervention and progress monitoring. Therefore, DIBELS assessments provide information directly related to early literacy skills necessary for young readers. Not only does DIBELS provide early literacy skill information in the identification of students at risk, Kim et al. (2010) add DIBELS testing is a common and effective way to measure students' overall reading as well as progress monitoring these skills. Just as other researchers seek to predict student achievement using standardized measures of assessment, Kim et al. (2010) not only highlight the role DIBELS testing plays in measuring students' reading skills, but also provide information regarding identification and instructional purposes. From this research arises a purpose more than just predicting student achievement; the purpose becomes collecting data from measures to inform instruction.

According to Kame'enui (2002), the National Reading First Assessment Committee identified four purposes for a school wide early literacy assessment system inclusive of screening, progress monitoring, diagnosis, and measuring student outcomes. Coyne and Harn (2006) align the DIBELS with the goals of the National Reading First Assessment Committee's assessment system, in that DIBELS allows teachers to use assessment data to screen, progress monitor, diagnose, and measure student outcomes. "By completing the link between assessment and instruction, schools can dramatically increase the number of students who become successful readers in the primary grades" (Coyne & Harn 2006, p. 42). Though the link between assessment and instruction is emphasized, little is known as to how teachers use the data collected from screening measures to inform instruction. Coyne and Harn (2006) find assessments to promote reading achievement when they answer existing questions of teachers and schools, as well as

allow for "informed, data-based instructional decision making" (p. 33). Additionally, Invernizzi, Landrum, Teichman & Townsend (2010) suggest that assessment information can help teachers to make curricular goals and determine specific instructional goals and objectives (p. 439). One early literacy screening measure that Invernizzi et al. (2010) discuss is The Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening for Preschoolers (PALS-PreK). This measure, like other early literacy assessments, aligns directly with the Early Literacy Panel and provides useful information for teachers to design developmentally appropriate instruction for individual students.

Reilly (2007) followed a teacher kindergarten teacher who administered DIBELS, Marie Clay's Observation Survey, as well as a computer-assisted Waterford Early Reading Program (WERP). The teacher used the data collected in the fall to determine which students would be at risk for reading difficulties and planned instruction accordingly. Through progress monitoring and the use of multiple assessments, her instruction was informed throughout the school year based upon the data derived from these measures. In addition to the teacher's data-driven instructional decisions, Begeny and Buchanan (2010) stress the importance of teacher judgment in designing instruction. Clay (1991) agrees that schools should find each student at his/her knowledge base and adjust learning from that point forward (p. 19). The teacher utilizes the data for instruction from the assessments administered and also adjusts instruction based upon observation of the students.

Furthermore, there is a lack of research that illustrates how data from assessments can be utilized for effective instruction. Though some researchers, such as Reilly (2007), are starting to investigate how teachers utilize data from measures that allow for progress monitoring, there is still more research to be done on this topic. It is plausible that comprehensive early literacy

assessment systems, such as DIBELS, provide useful information to teachers, but more research needs to be conducted to determine how all (standardized and CBMs) kindergarten screening measures inform classroom reading instruction.

Summary

Policies and mandates that drive instruction within today's schools continue to grow and evolve. Legislation continues to evolve and new goals are established in regards to best practice instruction and student achievement. Kindergarten readiness screening is necessary to determine the level of students upon entrance into formal schooling, however the screening is only as useful when the data is used to implicate for instruction. Kindergarten screening data is necessary to provide a data entry point, as to where students' instruction should begin. Thus differentiation for individual students will be purported in order to accommodate to not only the proficient readers but also the struggling readers, in order to evidence growth in all students, thus narrowing the achievement gaps and bringing students to grade-level reading proficiency.

Chapter 3: METHODOLODY

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine how teachers utilize kindergarten-screening data to inform instruction, within the field of reading. In addition, this study investigated the measures used to assess kindergarten early literacy skills and the consistency of their implementation amongst Indiana schools. The formal research questions are as follows: (1) How do Indiana schools assess students entering kindergarten? (2)What screening measures are used in Indiana to determine early literacy skills upon entrance into kindergarten? (3) What information does the data from screening measures provide teachers at the initial entry into the kindergarten school year? (4) How do kindergarten teachers report using data from early reading screening instruments and assessment measures to inform classroom instruction within kindergarten classrooms?

Method

Survey research according to Gall, Gall, and Borg (2010) is "the systematic collection of data about participants' beliefs, attitudes, interests, and behavior using standardized measures such as questionnaires, interviews, and tests" (p. 212). For the purpose of this study, a Qualtrics-designed, web-based survey was sent to Indiana private and public elementary school administrators, with the intent that the administrators would forward the survey to their kindergarten teacher with the most years of experience (refer to Appendix A). This descriptive study examined responses from kindergarten teachers for each item in the survey. To seek answers to the first research question, information was collected regarding the screening measures Indiana schools administer. To answer the second research question, information was collected to identify the kindergarten screening measures used to assess early literacy skills. To answer the third research question, teachers were asked what information the data from screening

measures provides them at the initial entry into the kindergarten school year. Finally, to address the fourth research question, teachers were asked to identify how they use the screening data to inform reading instruction for the kindergarten school year. Upon panel review, these research questions were extensively reviewed and revised to address the purpose of this study.

Participants

A database of all Indiana elementary school principals' email addresses was acquired with permission from fellow researchers to use in sending out the survey electronically. A cover letter was sent to all principals of all the private and public Indiana elementary schools (refer to Appendix B). The principal was asked to forward the survey to the kindergarten teacher with the most years of kindergarten teaching experience at that school. Therefore, the participants in this study were administrators and/or kindergarten teachers, in the event that the administrators chose to complete the survey rather than forward it on to the kindergarten teacher. One survey was completed per school, as the kindergarten entrance screenings would be the same for all teachers.

Survey Development

The survey used within this study was developed after examining a previous survey study conducted by Michael Conn-Powers and Jessica Peters from the Early Childhood Center at the Indiana Institute on Disability and Community, Indiana University-Bloomington (2006). It was the researcher's original intent to include some of the Indiana University's survey questions on this study's survey; however, these did not align with the research questions of this study. Determining whether schools administer readiness assessments was similar, but this current study sought to link classroom reading instruction with data collection. Conn-Powers and Peter's survey included questions relating readiness assessments and the domains of development (health and physical well-being, motor development, etc.). The current study's survey did not

include items pertaining to the domains of development amongst readiness measures, but instead included items that asked for demographic information of the teacher and kindergarten grade level within each school. Therefore, additional questions were added that specifically linked readiness screening and classroom reading instruction. Thus, this study's survey was patterned after the Indiana University survey instrument.

Once the survey items were developed, Qualtrics, an electronic survey database program, was used to build the survey online. Qualtrics allowed the researcher to create multiple choice and short-answer questions through the use of visuals and scales (e.g. likert). The Qualtrics database was chosen by the researcher because it allows teachers to complete survey items quickly and allows easy access to the results.

Procedures

Pilot Survey

Two pilot studies were conducted to test the instrument. The initial pilot was conducted with a group of four Indiana kindergarten teachers, within the same suburban school. The initial pilot survey allowed the researcher to determine if changes needed to be made to the survey instrument before distributing it for data collection. The teachers' responses to the survey were that the questions were clear and the Qualtrics database was easy to use. These teacher responses provided the information needed to address the research questions. Upon further discussion with colleagues regarding necessary clarifying changes to be made to the survey instrument, a follow-up pilot was conducted with a kindergarten teacher at a second elementary school. This provided additional validity as to the clarity of the survey instrument. Teachers who participated in either pilot were omitted from the sample of Indiana kindergarten teachers who were surveyed in this study.

Study Survey

Participants in this study received the same cover letter and survey instrument, along with the steps to complete the survey, which was uniform for all participants. Within the cover letter, information was provided to the administrators and teachers, which described the importance of this study for Indiana reading proficiency in the primary grades (K-3). The web-based survey was sent via email to all private and public Indiana elementary school principals.

As the administrators and/or kindergarten teachers completed the survey, responses returned to the Qualtrics database at the University. Each school was anonymous, due to the code given by Qualtrics to each survey response. However, if the respondents chose to receive results of the study, they were required to submit an email address at the end of the survey. Submitting an email address to receive the study's results was optional and did not link identification of the completed survey to the respondent. The email addresses collected from those who wanted to receive the results were compiled separately from the data collected from the survey instrument.

Time Frame

The schools were given four weeks to complete the survey and return it electronically to the researcher for data analysis. After one week from the initial distribution of surveys to the Indiana administrators, an email reminder was sent to remind participants of the upcoming survey return date. Within the email, a short description of the study was provided, as it was in the first cover letter, to remind administrators and teachers of the purpose of this study. A second email reminder was sent at the end of two weeks, again with a short description of the study's purpose. A third and final email reminder was sent to all remaining Indiana schools who had not yet completed the survey. Refer to Appendix B.

Analysis

Based upon responses from survey participants, the data were analyzed to address the research questions. The items in the survey were aligned with the research questions (see Appendix C), which identifies which specific survey items pertain to each research question.

In addition to the survey items that pertain to each research question, demographic questions were included to gain background information of each school that responded (e.g. school enrollment population, student demographics within kindergarten classrooms and location of schools). In addition, demographic questions were included to gain background information of each kindergarten teacher (see Appendix C).

The data collected from these items was quantitative data (nominal and continuous) and descriptive short answers. Descriptive statistic analyses were conducted to determine the means and standard deviations of the continuous variables. Frequency counts were conducted to analyze the nominal data. To examine the short answer responses, the researcher along with a fellow co-researcher reviewed the data and individually coded the narrative responses. Then, the researchers jointly examined the coding of the data and developed categories that described the general trends of how teachers reported using screening testing data (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984).

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine the current kindergarten screening measures used within the state of Indiana. More than just which measures are administered, this study specifically sought to identify the early literacy screening assessments administered and how the data are used to inform classroom reading instruction. Additionally, this study sought demographic information from each school to determine how screening measures and their uses vary from school to school within the state of Indiana.

Distributing the Survey

The online Qualtrics survey was sent a total of four times. The initial distribution of the survey took place on April 25, 2013 at 6:30AM. Exactly one week later, the survey was redistributed to those who had not responded to the initial distribution. A third redistribution of the survey took place exactly two weeks after the initial distribution and a final distribution was sent exactly three weeks after the first survey sending. The Qualtrics database recorded 115 surveys started and 89 surveys completely finished by respondents. Based upon the 89 completed surveys, the results from this online survey are outlined within the next section. A part of the 89 surveys are those who identified that they do not use screening measures prior to kindergarten. Those respondents still count towards the completed number of surveys, though they did not proceed past question five. Therefore the majority of the survey items were completed by those who had identified they administer kindergarten screening measures, approximately 62 respondents (see Table 4.1). It is important to note that respondents were not required to complete every question during survey completion. Therefore, some questions may have fewer responses than others.

Table 4.1 Number of Responses on Qualtrics Survey

Initial Data	
Surveys started	115
Surveys completed	89

Average response rate of those who **DO** assess children's preparation of readiness for kindergarten	62

Results

Results addressing classroom and teacher demographics

To best understand the results of the data, it is important to analyze the demographic information of schools completing the survey. Results from the demographic survey questions', follow. First, in this sample of respondents, all responses came from educators in public schools. No private schools participated in the completion of this survey.

Next, the highest percentage of respondents indicated that their school received a Grade D and the mean for Grades A-F (1-5 Likert scale) was 3.54 (see Table 4.2). Indiana, in 2011-2012, assigned a Grade A to 41% of schools, a Grade B to 20.1% of schools, a Grade C to 20.4% of schools, a Grade D to 11.6% of schools and a Grade F to 7% of schools. Data is not yet available for the 2012-2013 school year. With these percentages in mind, respondents of this survey were amongst those that received poorer state-assigned school grades, as indicated by only 3% of schools responding that were assigned a Grade A by the state of Indiana.

Table 4.2 Percentages of Responses Regarding State Grade Assigned to School

#	Answer		Response	%
1	A		2	3%
2	B		11	15%
3	C		17	24%
4	D		30	42%
5	F		12	17%
	Total		72	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	5
Mean	3.54

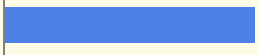
Table 4.3 displays the average number of kindergarten students per respondent and the variation in student demographics. Based upon the responses collected by all schools, the minimum number of students in kindergarten at a school was 25 pupils and the maximum number of students in kindergarten at a school was 100 pupils. Caucasian students were among the highest number of students within the schools that responded, with an average of 62.17 Caucasian pupils, as opposed to Asian students (2.5), African American students (8.53) and Hispanic students (8.24). The average number of kindergarten classrooms per school was 3.79 as indicated by a total of 91 survey responses.

Table 4.3 Percentages and Totals of Schools' Kindergarten Classroom Demographics

#	Answer	Min Value	Max Value	Average Value	Standard Deviation	Responses
1	Total number of students in kindergarten at your school	25.00	100.00	78.09	21.98	91
2	Number of African American students in kindergarten	0.00	100.00	8.53	16.29	79
3	Number of Hispanic students in kindergarten	0.00	67.00	8.24	12.35	76
4	Number of Caucasian students in kindergarten	2.00	100.00	62.17	24.76	82
5	Number of Asian students in kindergarten	0.00	25.00	2.50	4.66	52

Over half of the schools that responded to this survey (51%) reported that they are a rural school. Only 18% identified themselves as an urban school. The remaining 31% identified themselves as suburban schools (see Table 4.4).

Table 4.4 Percentages of Urban, Suburban and Rural Schools

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Urban (inner-city schools)		17	18%
2	Suburban (outside city schools)		29	31%
3	Rural (country schools)		48	51%
	Total		94	100%

According to Table 4.5, schools from each region of Indiana per the Educational Service Centers responded. The most responses came from Region 4 (East Central Indiana Educational Service Center) and Region 6 (Northwest Indiana Education Center), 17% and 16% respectively. The fewest number of responses came from Region 2 (The Wilson Education Center, Southeastern Indiana) and Region 3 (West Central Education Center), 6% and 7% respectively.

Table 4.5 Percentage of Responses Per Educational Service Center Location

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Southern Indiana Education Center (Region 1)		7	8%
2	The Wilson Education Center (Region 2)		5	6%
3	West Central Education Center (Region 3)		6	7%
4	East Central Indiana Educational Service Center (Region 4)		14	17%
5	Wabash Valley Education Center (Region 5)		7	8%
6	Northwest Indiana Education Center (Region 6)		13	16%
7	Northern Indiana Education Center (Region 7)		10	12%
8	Region 8 Education Center (Region 8)		9	11%
9	Central Indiana Education Service Center (Region 9)		12	14%
	Total		83	100%

According to survey responses, kindergarten programs included either full-day kindergarten only or half-day and full-day kindergarten programs combined. According to 94% of this survey's respondents, kindergarten programs are full-day (see Table 4.6).

Table 4.6 Percentage of Type of Program Available at Each School

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Half-Day Kindergarten only		0	0%
2	Full-Day Kindergarten only		87	94%
3	Half-Day kindergarten and Full-Day kindergarten		6	6%
	Total		93	100%

The majority of responses were from female educators (91%) and males accounted for the other 9%. There was a range of ages amongst Indiana educators who completed this survey. Thirty-five percent of respondents were between the ages of 41-50 years old. In contrast, 6% of respondents were between the ages of 21-30 years old. Teachers below the age of 30 and above the age of 60 were amongst the smallest percentages of respondents (6% and 9% respectively) (see Table 4.7).

Table 4.7 Percentages of Ages of Respondents

#	Answer		Response	%
1	21-30 years old		5	6%
2	31-40 years old		24	28%
3	41-50 years old		30	35%
4	51-60 years old		19	22%
5	60+ years old		8	9%
	Total		86	100%

Respondents indicated Caucasian origin (98%) as their ethnicity, with a small percentage (2%) identifying themselves of Hispanic origin. Educators who completed this survey varied in their marital status. Eighty percent of respondents indicated that they are married, whereas only 10% reported being single. Divorced/separated and widowed were amongst the smallest percentage of responses (7%, 2% respectively) (see Table 4.8).

Table 4.8 Percentage of Respondents According to Marital Status

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Single		9	10%
2	Married		70	80%
3	Widowed		2	2%
4	Divorced/Separated		6	7%
	Total		87	100%

Many survey respondents (64%) indicated that they hold a master's degree, 24% indicated that they hold a bachelor's degree, and 12% responded that they hold an education specialist degree (see Table 4.9).

Table 4.9 Percentages of Respondents According to Highest Degree Earned

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Bachelor's Degree		21	24%
2	Master's Degree		55	64%
3	Education Specialist Degree		10	12%
4	Doctoral Degree		0	0%
	Total		86	100%

Finally, survey participants were asked to identify who completed this survey. Sixty-one percent of respondents indicated that they were teachers with the most years of experience in their building and 39% responded that they were administrators. Of the twenty-four respondents who were not teachers with the most years of experience in their building, fifteen were administrators/principals, eight were kindergarten teachers, and one was a title one teacher.

Results Addressing Each Research Question

In order to examine the results of this study, it is important to align each survey item with its corresponding research question. See Appendix C. A description follows.

Research Question #1: How do Indiana schools assess students entering kindergarten?

Based upon the data gathered from the survey items pertaining to research question #1 of how Indiana schools assess students entering kindergarten, there are many differences existing in the assessment of students entering kindergarten among survey respondents. Three-quarters of the sample of respondents indicated that they assess students upon entrance into kindergarten, but a quarter of the respondents indicated that they do not (see Table 4.10).

Table 4.10 Percentage of Schools Assessing Children's Preparation or Readiness for Kindergarten

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Yes		65	75%
2	Not sure		0	0%
3	No		22	25%
	Total		87	100%

Aside from DIBELS, the Bracken Basic Concepts Scale, and teacher-created informal checklists, 39% of respondents indicated other measures used to assess students upon entry into kindergarten (see Table 4.11). According to these responses, it is clear that various assessment measures are administered within the state of Indiana to assess students entering kindergarten.

Table 4.11 Percentage of Responses of Screening Instruments Used to Measure Readiness for Kindergarten

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Dynamic Basic Indicators of Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS)		26	42%
2	Bracken Basic Concepts Scale		1	2%
3	Informal checklist (teacher-created, non-commercial)		41	66%
4	Other		24	39%

Other assessments administered, some of which screen children upon entrance into kindergarten, include: NWEA Reading and Math, ESGI (Educational Software for Guiding Instruction), Gessell Readiness Test, Kindergarten Readiness Test by Scholastic, Brigance Screener, Early Star Literacy, MCLASS, IRDA (Indiana Reading Diagnostic Assessment) and EPSF (Early Prevention of School Failure. These assessments were written in as alternate forms of measures used to assess students entering kindergarten, aside from DIBELS, the Bracken

Basic Concepts Scale, and teacher-created informal checklists. Not only do these assessments vary in what they assess, they also vary in their type of assessment (e.g., evaluative measure, screening measure, developmental screening measure). The assessments identified as evaluative, assess progress made by individual students whereas screening measures assess their initial skill levels. Developmental screening measures assess basic skills such as letter identification and letter sound recognition. Measures that are developmental can also assess motor skills, social/emotional skills, and behavior skills. Some assessments such as MCLASS/DIBELS can be used as a screener and then also to evaluate students as they proceed throughout the school year. Many of these assessments, as identified below, assess areas of early literacy development (e.g., phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, comprehension, fluency, concepts about print). However, some of these measures focus on letter identification and letter sound identification versus all the components of early literacy development. These assessments are also not restricted to just literacy-related skills; many of these assessments measure math-related skills as well (see Table 4.12).

Table 4.12 Identification of Other Forms of Assessment Used Upon Kindergarten Entry

Assessment	**Areas Assessed**	**Type of Assessment**
NWEA , MAP (Measures of Academic Progress)	Reading (phonological awareness, phonics) and Math (number sense, computation)	Evaluative Measure
ESGI (Educational Software for Guiding Instruction)	Reading (phonological awareness, phonics, phonemic awareness, concepts about print) and Math (number recognition, patterning, shapes, etc)	Screening Measure
Gessell Readiness Test	Reading (phonemic awareness, comprehension, language), Math (number recognition, visual/spatial), Developmental Skills (social, emotional, adaptive)	Developmental Screening Measure
Kindergarten Readiness Test by Scholastic	Reading (vocabulary, phonemic awareness, comprehension) and Math (visual discrimination, mathematical knowledge)	Developmental Screening Measure
Brigance Screener	Academic/Cognitive (Number sense, phonemic awareness) in addition to social-emotional, self-help, physical development	Developmental Screening Measure
Star Early Literacy	Reading (alphabetic principle, concept of a word, visual discrimination, phonemic awareness, phonics, comprehension, vocabulary) and Math (early numeracy)	Evaluative and Screening Measure
MCLASS/DIBELS	Reading (text reading, comprehension, fluency, phonemic awareness, phonics)	Evaluative and Screening Measure
IRDA (Indiana Reading Diagnostic Assessment)	Reading(phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, comprehension, vocabulary)	Evaluative Measure
EPSF (Early Prevention of School Failure)	Reading (phonemic awareness, phonics) and Writing	Evaluative and Screening Measure

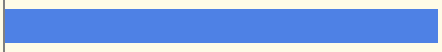
In addition to various assessment measures being administered, 85% of respondents indicated that they assess students who are not present for the initial screening administration, whereas 15% of schools do not.

In addition to the variation amongst measures used to assess students entering kindergarten, non-uniformity also exists regarding when screening assessments occur and who administers them. As indicated in Table 4.13, 76% of screening assessments occur in the Spring, 8% in the Summer, 15% in the Fall, and 2% in the Winter. Certified Staff Personnel (teachers, administrators, school psychologists, school counselors) were amongst the hight of staff (87%) to administer these assessments. Support Staff Personnel (instructional assistants, title one teachers) and Volunteers were less likely to administer these assessments (11%, 2% respectively) (see Table 4.14).

Table 4.13 Percentage of Responses According to **When** Screening Assessments Occur

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Spring		47	76%
2	Summer		5	8%
3	Fall		9	15%
4	Winter		1	2%
	Total		62	100%

Table 4.14 Percentage of Responses of **Who** Administers Screening Assessments

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Certified Staff Personnel (teachers, administrators, school psychologists, school counselors)		53	87%
2	Support Staff Personnel (Instructional assistants, title 1 teachers)		7	11%
3	Volunteers		1	2%
	Total		61	100%

Research Question #1 Results Summary

Based upon the data provided by the respondents on the survey items pertaining to research question #1, it appears that there are different practices occurring amidst Indiana schools to assess students entering kindergarten. Some Indiana schools assess students entering kindergarten and some do not. There is variation amongst the measures used. Some measures are evaluative and some are used solely to screen childrens' initial skills levels. There are also differences present between when and who administers screening measures. Because this research study seeks to determine the screening measures administered to specifically assess early literacy skills, the next section will address that second research question.

Research Question #2: What screening measures are used in Indiana to determine early literacy skills upon entrance into kindergarten?

Based upon the data provided regarding the screening measures administered in Indiana to assess early literacy skills, more than half of survey respondents (63%) indicated that the

screening measures they administer assess early literacy skills, whereas 37% identified that the screening measures did not assess early literacy skills.

Survey respondents were asked to specify how they determine reading instruction for individual students. Survey respondents were able to choose more than one answer if applicable. Seventy-seven percent of respondents indicated that they use beginning of the year screening data to determine individual reading instruction. Most respondents indicated that they use progress-monitoring data throughout the year and informal assessments (running records, anecdotal notes, checklists) to determine individual reading instruction (95%, 93% respectively). The use of Common Core Standards to determine individual reading instruction was also identified as used often (72%). Curriculum-provided tests, quizzes, and worksheets and statewide teacher evaluation purposeful planning objectives were not reported as often in determining individual reading instruction (56%, 34% respectively). (see Table 4.15).

Table 4.15 Percentages for Determining Reading Instruction for **Individual** Students

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Beginning of the year screening data		47	77%
2	Progress monitoring data throughout the year		58	95%
3	Informal assessments (running records, anecdotal notes, checklists)		57	93%
4	Curriculum-provided tests, quizzes, worksheets		34	56%
5	Common core standards		44	72%
6	Statewide teacher evaluation purposeful planning objectives		21	34%

In addition to how survey respondents determine individual reading instruction, a separate question also asked which is the most commonly used form of data to determine individual reading instruction for students (see Table 4.16). The previous question sought to determine what resources were used to determine individual reading instruction (with the possibility of some respondents choosing more than one), whereas this question seeks to understand which is the most commonly used method to determine individual reading instruction.

Table 4.16 Percentages of Most Commonly Used Method to Determine **Individual** Reading Instruction

Most Commonly Used	**95%**	**Progress Monitoring data** throughout the Year
	93%	**Informal Assessments** (running records, anecdotal notes, checklists)
	77%	Beginning of the year **screening data**
	72%	**Common Core State Standards**
	56%	**Curriculum-provided tests, quizzes, worksheets**
Least Commonly Used	**34%**	**Statewide teacher evaluation** purposeful planning objectives

Research Question #2 Results Summary

According to results from survey items pertaining to research question two, some schools assess early literacy skills upon entrance into kindergarten and some do not. Based upon the data provided, it appears that beginning of the year screening data is used to determine individual reading instruction as reported by 77% of the survey respondents, but that it is not the most *commonly used* source of data to determine individual reading instruction (progress-monitoring data and informal assessments, 95%, 93% respectively). Therefore schools vary in the way that determine individual reading instruction and the methods employed to do so. The third research

question addresses what information is provided through the administration of kindergarten screening measures.

Research Question #3: What information does the data from screening measures provide teachers at the initial entry into the kindergarten school year?

Survey respondents were asked to choose all that apply in regards to what data from screening measures helps them to determine academic plans for students. According to the data provided in Table 4.17, 49 survey respondents indicated that they use data from kindergarten screening measures to determine appropriate instruction for individual students. Other survey respondents indicated that aside from instruction, screening data provides information in determining class lists and balanced classrooms. Therefore, other than the choices provided, teachers use screening data for class list development and attempts to balance classrooms.

Table 4.17 Percentages of Responses of What Screening Measure Data Helps to Determine

#	Answer	Screening assessments help us to determine:
1	Entrance into kindergarten	35
2	Appropriate instruction for individual students	49
3	At-risk for special education services	41
4	Gifted and Talented Instruction	24
5	Other	14

In addition to how the screening data are used, survey respondents were also asked to identify which resource they most commonly use to determine students' reading instruction at the beginning of the school year. This is in contrast to Table 4.15, which identifies the data sources used to determine *individual* reading instruction. Table 4.18 indicates which resource is most commonly used to determine students' reading instruction at the beginning of the year. Based upon the data provided by respondents, the most commonly used method to determine

students' reading instruction at the beginning of the year is kindergarten-screening data, although only reported by half. Common Core Standards, commercial curricular programs, school-created curriculum maps/year-long plans and district/school report cards were much less commonly used to determine students' reading instruction (21%, 11%, 8%, 7% respectively).

Table 4.18 Percentage of Responses Regarding Determining Students' Reading Instruction

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Kindergarten screening data		32	52%
2	District/School report cards		4	7%
3	Common Core standards		13	21%
4	Commercial curriculum programs (i.e. Scott Foresman)		7	11%
5	School-created curriculum maps, year-long plans		5	8%
	Total		61	100%

Seventy percent of survey respondents assigned a Grade D to their satisfaction of results obtained from kindergarten screening instruments. Grades A and B received the smallest percentage of satisfaction from respondents regarding the results obtained from kindergarten screening instruments. The mean value was 3.70 (see Table 4.19).

Tables 4.19 Percentage of Satisfaction from Kindergarten Screening Instrument Results

Likert Scale 1-5, Grades A-F

#	Answer		Response	%
1	A		2	5%
2	B		2	5%
3	C		4	11%
4	D		26	70%
5	F		3	8%
	Total		37	100%

Statistic	Value
Mean	3.70

Research Question #3 Results Summary

According to survey respondents regarding research question three, there is a lack of consistency amongst Indiana schools as to how kindergarten screening provides information to teachers at the beginning of the school year. Some Indiana schools reported that the data is used to help determine instruction for individual students while others reported that they simply use the data to create class lists. In addition, there was variation amongst how schools determine reading instruction at the beginning of the school year. Furthermore, many schools who responded (70%) reported a Grade D satisfaction with the current screening measures used in their school. The final research question addresses how the data from kindergarten screening measures are used to inform classroom reading instruction. More than just how it provides information, this study seeks to identify how the data is used to plan for reading instruction. The data below are aligned with the fourth research question.

Research Question #4: How do kindergarten teachers report using data from early reading screening instruments and assessment measures to inform instruction within kindergarten classrooms?

Survey respondents were asked to identify how useful they felt the assessment tools were that they administered, in terms of providing data from which to determine classroom-reading instruction. This was based upon a Likert scale of values 1 to 7. Only 13% of all survey respondents indicated that they found the assessment tools to determine classroom-reading instruction to be very useful. On the contrary, similar respondents found the assessments less useful (Very Useless, 8%, Useless, 3% and Somewhat Useless, 5%) (see Table 4.20).

Table 4.20 Percentages of Responses Indicating Usefulness of Assessment Tools to Determine Classroom-Reading Instruction

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Very Useless		5	8%
2	Useless		2	3%
3	Somewhat Useless		3	5%
4	Neutral		9	15%
5	Somewhat Useful		20	32%
6	Useful		15	24%
7	Very Useful		8	13%
	Total		62	100%

Responses from Open-Ended Question

In addition to answers provided to multiple choice questions on the survey instrument, teachers were also asked to describe how they use data from initial kindergarten screening measures to differentiate reading instruction. Responses varied from using the data to determine small group reading instruction to planning for interventions with struggling students, while other teachers stated, “we don’t use it for that” or “we don’t really use that data except to create classroom lists”. Therefore, the use of data from these measures varies depending on the school and its purpose for kindergarten screening. The results revealed five categories of how teachers report using screening measures’ data: ability grouping, small group instruction, interventions, developmental assessment and data not used for reading instruction. Statements from the respondents supported each of these categories. See Appendix D for responses.

Many of the respondents indicated that they use the data from screening measures to inform instruction whether by grouping students according to ability or to place them within small, guided reading groups. Other respondents indicated that they use the data to determine specific interventions and supports for students who need additional scaffolding of skills. Furthermore, some respondents indicated that they use screening data to assess the

developmental skills students bring with them to kindergarten, as in letter identification, letter-sound identification and concepts about print. Within the developmental assessment category, many respondents reflected a reading readiness view, even using this terminology, when referring to the skillsets of students.

Interestingly, a fifth category emerged indicating that screening data does not provide information for reading instruction. This coincides well with the greater number of respondents indicating that they did not find their current screening measures to be extremely useful. Therefore, it appears that some schools are not using screening data to inform instruction but it is used for other purposes.

It is important to note that the use of DIBELS was mentioned often and some respondents indicated that this assessment was used as a means to determine reading instruction whereas other respondents indicated that DIBELS was not the screening measure administered to incoming kindergarten students. Therefore, there is a discrepancy between the administration of DIBELS and its purpose. Some respondents use it to screen students and some use other screening measures, with DIBELS following at the beginning of the school year to determine reading instruction. Therefore, it is unclear as to what screening measures some schools use prior to the administration of DIBELS, if DIBELS is not their primary screening instrument.

Research Question #4 Results Summary

According to survey respondents, there were varied levels of usefulness reported with the kindergarten screening measures schools choose to administer. Based upon the descriptive data provided by respondents, there are many differences regarding the use of data from screening measures and how it pertains to reading instruction. Not only are the purposes different, but also the perceptions of how teachers view themselves using the data varies. Many words were used

interchangeably, e.g. ability grouping, small groups, high/medium/low. Therefore, the terminology used to describe the uses of data from screening measures creates an unclear picture of the uniformity amongst Indiana schools and their purposes for conducting kindergarten-screening assessments.

Summary

Teachers and administrators completed this survey for a combined total of 89 responses. Not all schools in the study reported assessing students prior to entrance into kindergarten. Of the schools that do assess children entering kindergarten, assessment practices vary amongst each other. Some schools use informal checklists and teacher-created assessments whereas other schools use commercial assessments such as DIBELS, The Bracken Basic Concepts Scale, etc. When considering early literacy skills' assessment, some schools assess early literacy skills upon entrance into kindergarten and some do not. Though many schools responded that they use beginning of the year screening data to determine classroom-reading instruction, it was not the most commonly used form of assessment for individual student reading instruction. Similarly, schools varied in how they determine reading instruction at the beginning of the school year. Many of the schools that participated in this survey received a low grade for their school and many identified that they were not greatly satisfied with the current information provided by their kindergarten screening assessment, nor did they find their current screening measure to be extremely useful. Finally, many participants responded that they use the data from kindergarten screening measures for different purposes, as indicated in the open-ended responses. Some respondents indicated that the data is utilized to inform instruction and some indicated that they utilize the data for other purposes such as classroom lists and ability grouping. Results of the

survey indicate that administration procedures and assessment tools to assess students entering kindergarten are not uniform in Indiana.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine how Indiana schools assess students entering kindergarten and how these assessments inform instruction, particularly as it pertains to early literacy. More than just which measures are administered, this study specifically seeks to identify the early literacy screening assessments administered and how the data are used to inform classroom reading instruction. Additionally, this study sought demographic information from each school to determine how screening measures and their uses vary from school to school within the state of Indiana. Based upon data collected from survey respondents, there were a balanced proportion of responses from all regions in the state of Indiana.

Key Findings

Key findings as a result of this study follow with a discussion of each finding.

Kindergarten screening procedures lack uniformity

According to survey responses submitted by participating Indiana schools, one-fourth of these schools do not assess children's preparation or readiness for kindergarten. Of the 75% who do assess children's preparation or readiness for kindergarten, measures used to assess student readiness are not consistent. Some schools use specific literacy measures to determine student reading development upon kindergarten entry, as identified by 42% of survey respondents who administer DIBELS as the measure to screen students entering kindergarten. Coyne and Harn (2006) align the DIBELS with the goals of the National Reading First Assessment Committee's assessment system, in that DIBELS allows teachers to use assessment data to screen, progress monitor, diagnose, and measure student outcomes. Further, some Indiana schools are placing an emphasis on beginning reading assessment as their screening measure, whereas other schools are administering assessments that measure general student readiness for kindergarten. Many

schools seek reading development data due to the increased accountability placed upon them according to state mandates (Iread3:2010). With the inconsistencies amongst the state of Indiana regarding the purpose and measures used to assess students entering kindergarten, there is a lack of resolution as to the most appropriate ways to assess kindergarten students in order to ensure their success, specifically as it pertains to reading. "By completing the link between assessment and instruction, schools can dramatically increase the number of students who become successful readers in the primary grades" (Coyne & Harn 2006, p. 42). This is especially important since the implementation of IREAD3:2010 within the state of Indiana and the expectations of our young readers, as will be discussed later in this section.

Some Measures Assess Literacy and Some Do Not

As indicated by survey responses, many Indiana schools choose DIBELS as a measure for kindergarten screening. DIBELS is a measurement that is specific to the area of reading. According to Kim, Petscher, Schatschneider, and Foorman (2010), these tests allow for identification of students at-risk for reading difficulties, thus students who may need intervention and progress monitoring. Other tests, such as NWEA Math, Bracken Basic Concepts Scale, teacher-created checklists, those of which are not specific to reading, may create a concern for teachers who are under increased accountability to produce proficient readers. Sixty-six percent of respondents identified the use of checklists as a means to assess students entering kindergarten. Though some informal checklists, such as concepts about print tests and running records, are used to determine a child's literacy development (Clay, 1991), it is unknown as to what informal checklists actually measure and assess. Some checklists could simply assess students' letter recognition and letter sounds and other informal checklists could have no questions related to reading. This creates an area of unknown for how schools are assessing

students upon entrance into kindergarten, as there is no information to determine what the checklists actually assess and how that data is linked to reading instruction.

Dissatisfaction is Present with Screening Measures Used

According to the survey responses, many teachers reported dissatisfaction with the current measures they use to assess students in kindergarten. Seventy percent of survey respondents assigned a Grade D to the satisfaction of their current kindergarten screening instrument, in sharp contrast to 5% assigning a Grade A satisfaction and 5% assigning a Grade B satisfaction to their screening instrument. It is unclear as to the reasons behind the dissatisfaction but it appears from the research that not only are respondents dissatisfied with the screening instruments, they also do not feel the assessment tools are useful. Thirty-two percent of survey respondents indicated that the screening assessments they administer are only *somewhat useful.* Teachers and/or administrators find little utility from the data provided by these measures. However, as indicated in Table 4.17, teachers are making educational decisions for students, even when dissatisfied with their screening measures. Many researchers (Coyne and Harn, 2006; Goffreda, Diperna, & Pedersen, 2009; Invernizzi et al., 2010; McCoach, O'Connell, Reis, & Levitt, 2006; Missall, Reschly, Vets, McConnell, Heistad, Pickart, Sheran, & Matron et al., 2007; Rouse and Fantuzzo, 2006) agree that screening data has utility when used to inform classroom instruction and narrow the gap between proficient and struggling readers. Therefore, the increased emphasis on reading proficiency has led researchers and some schools to focus screening instruments specifically on the assessment of reading skills rather than past measures that assessed other areas of development, such as the Bracken Basic Concepts Scale. Only 2% of survey responders administer the Bracken Basic Concepts Scale to assess kindergarten readiness.

Kindergarten Screening Measures Provide Inconsistent Data Use

As identified in chapter four, many schools responded that they use the data from kindergarten screening measures for different purposes. Specific to reading, most respondents indicated that they somehow use the data to inform instruction, whether it is through ability grouping, small guided reading grouping, determining next steps in mastering basic reading skills (developmental) and/or assigning interventions to students. However, some respondents indicated that they do not use the data from screening measures to inform reading instruction. Simply stated, one respondent said "We don't use it for that".

Therefore, Indiana schools are not consistent in the use of data from kindergarten screening measures. Though many respondents indicated that they used the data to better their reading instruction for individual children, others did not agree. Hence, there is a lack of uniformity regarding the purposes for kindergarten screening measures and how they allow teachers to better their reading instruction.

Lack of Data Available from Urban Areas and Private Schools

Many urban areas within the state of Indiana, some of which are struggling the most, did not respond to this survey. In Indianapolis public schools alone, there is reorganization happening at the district level in attempt to improve many failing schools (Elliott, 2013). This includes a 100-day plan compiled by the newly hired superintendent with the goal of improving Indianapolis Public Schools (Ferebee, 2013). Yet, many urban schools within Central Indiana chose not to participate in this study. Of the respondents who did, they indicated low state assigned school grades and low satisfaction with current screening instrument results. Only 18% of respondents indicated that their school location resides within an urban area. This was the

least represented area compared to 31% identifying their location as suburban and 51% identifying their location as rural.

In addition to the lack of responses from urban areas, there were no responses from Indiana private schools. Enrollment for non-public schools for the 2012-2013 school year was a total of 80,554 students, as provided on the Indiana Department of Education Compass website. Of the 80,554 students, 6,364 students were enrolled in non-public schools in 2012-2013. Therefore, there was a great lack of information regarding any kindergarten screening measures administered to this population of Indiana kindergarten students.

Purposes of Kindergarten-Screening Varies Across the State of Indiana

Costenbader et al. (2000) address the purpose of kindergarten assessments as instruments used to screen children's skills or developmental processes. According to survey respondents, kindergarten-screening measures in Indiana are used to screen skills or developmental processes. However, there is a lack of clarity as to which skillsets of developmental processes each addresses. This study found that appropriate instruction for individual children, as well as determining students at-risk for special education, were two of the most selected purposes for kindergarten screening measures. In contrast, a few schools determine student entrance into kindergarten and identify students for gifted and talented instruction, as provided by data from the measures. Other reasons for administration of kindergarten screening measures, as offered by respondents, included the development of class lists to create equal and balanced classrooms. Therefore, some schools do administer kindergarten-screening assessments with the purpose to help guide instruction but some schools do not. However, there is a lack of evidence from the results of this survey, as to whether the assessment is directly linked to reading development.

Limitations

According to Leedy and Ormrod (2010), there are some considerations to account for when conducting survey research. A limitation of this research is that a survey relies on self-report data. Often the participants indicate what they believe to be true or what the researcher wants to hear, rather than what is actual reality. In addition, the participants may present favorable answers to the survey questions, in order to make a better impression to the researcher (p. 188). In this study, whether the principal or most experienced kindergarten teacher completed the survey, it was anticipated they would answer accurately about the school's screening procedures.

Another limitation is a potential low return rate of the survey. Often people who receive questionnaires for survey research do not respond, creating a concern for the validity of the reported results. Additionally, the survey was sent to administrators with the intent of distribution to a kindergarten teacher with the most experience. However, not only did teachers respond but also administrators. This then created a possible discrepancy of what the administrator perceives kindergarten teachers are doing and what they truly do. With the steps necessary for completion of the survey, this could be a limitation of this study.

In addition, kindergarten teachers with the most years of experience were asked to complete the survey. However, the teacher may have been new to the kindergarten grade level for differing reasons (e.g. new teacher to the school, previously taught other grade levels), therefore not knowledgeable on kindergarten screening measures used within the school.

Even though two pilot studies (across two different schools) were conducted to refine the items in the survey, some teachers and/or administrators may have perceived the questions in a

different way than their intent. Therefore, clarity of the survey may have caused a limitation regarding responses to perceptions of the items.

Another limitation to this study could be that even though every region of Indiana was represented in the survey, a small sample may still have altered the results. Therefore, the original purpose of this study examining all Indiana schools would be affected.

Further, the time of distribution for this survey was during Indiana's standardized testing window. Therefore, the lack of responses to the survey could have been caused by the focus on standardized testing. In addition, the state implemented a new online testing component, which was not successful in its pilot, causing much stress within schools during the time of survey distribution. Furthermore, no private schools responded to this survey, which will affect the goal of the research questions.

Finally, the survey failed to include a question asking how many years of experience the respondent had as a teacher. With the responses coming from either administrators or teachers, it would have been helpful to identify how many years teaching each respondent had.

Implications

For Educators and Administrators

Teachers today are being held at a higher accountability due to policy and mandates driving education, which expect that reading proficiency and instruction must start early. With the implementation of I-Read3:2010, there is an even greater emphasis placed upon reading instruction and proficient reading skills by grade three. For this reason, teachers are seeking methods to assess students as early as possible, some evaluating reading competencies at the initial entry into kindergarten. All Indiana schools are expected to produce proficiency by grade three across urban, suburban, and rural districts comprised of both private and public schools.

Yet, there is no alignment across schools as to how best to accommodate the development of these young readers. Within the Fort Wayne area alone, there was variation amongst schools. In 2012-2013, Southwest Allen County Schools had an IREAD passing rate of 96.1%. This Fort Wayne public school district is in contrast to the Fort Wayne Community School's passing rate of 86.1%. Private schools, those within the Diocese of Fort Wayne, had a passing rate of 97.3%. Therefore, just within one Indiana city and some of its private and public schools, there is discrepancy between passing rates on IREAD. The statewide passing rate for the 2012-2013 school year was 91.4% (IREAD-3/IDOE).

In order to reduce the achievement gap of young readers, it is even more imperative that students entering kindergarten are accurately assessed and provided with rich instruction that will help them to become proficient readers. In order to provide rich instruction, the developmental levels of each student's abilities need to be assessed. And then, upon entrance into school, individual learning plans for each child should be developed. Therefore, the data collected from kindergarten screening measures can be utilized to determine necessary instruction for young readers. Some young readers may have deficits with letter naming and letter sounds while others may struggle with identifying concepts about print. Regardless of individual student skill deficits, teachers need to be informed from screening data as to a starting point for instruction for each individual child. Schools also need to be consistent in their administration procedures of kindergarten screening measures and utilize the data to make informed classroom instructional decisions. One area of consistency indicated by 76% of survey respondents was the administration of screening assessments in the spring. In order to align screening assessment procedures across the state, the time for kindergarten screening assessments will be important to

make uniform. It will also be important to have similar personnel administering the screening assessments, therefore to avoid bias in test administration.

There are also implications for pre-kindergarten programs that stem from this research. With the growing emphasis shifting toward early reading and reading proficiency, it is important that pre-kindergarten programs are evaluating the whole child before they begin formal school (kindergarten). Once students enter kindergarten, rich literacy instruction will begin and it will be important that students are already adjusted to structured learning environments and assessments that determine skill levels.

For Policy Makers

Teachers and administrators are working toward establishing proficiency with elementary readers and need opportunities to collaborate across the state with other schools to find particular methods of assessment for kindergarten screening useful in designing effective instruction accordingly. With the implementation of IREAD3:2010, there needs to be further consideration given to school demographics and the challenges that some Indiana schools may face in assessing and instructing young readers (i.e. high percentages of free/reduced lunch, lack of updated assessment materials, lack of educational opportunities for professional development).

It is necessary to provide Indiana schools with educational professional development opportunities to convey the importance of unifying the bond between assessment data and classroom instruction. Through professional development opportunities, teachers and administrators can determine research-based measures used to assess early literacy skills and connect the data from these measures to best practice literacy instruction.

Further research

State Level

For future research, this study will be extended to further determine how teachers and/or administrators report using kindergarten-screening data and how it is actually used within the classroom. One school, from each region of Indiana that is represented in this study, will be randomly selected to participate in individual case studies. The researcher will observe throughout a school year, within the classrooms, to see what is actually being implemented and utilized for instruction. Data will then be analyzed to determine comparisons this survey's results and the results of classroom observations. Further, as this study revealed, some of the respondents of this study were administrators. Therefore, it will be important to examine the differences between the expectations that administrators have for the kindergarten screening process and the expectations of teachers.

Another comparison can be made within these case studies to determine what screening measures are being used amongst high achieving schools (grades A's and B's), as well as those who are satisfied with their current screening measures. These results can then be compared to schools that are failing and dissatisfied with their screening instruments.

With an emphasis now placed upon early literacy skills and proficiency (IREAD3:2010), further research needs to examine the best kindergarten screening assessments to determine student reading skills upon entrance into kindergarten. With a uniform assessment procedure, across the regions of Indiana, teachers can then make informed decisions regarding literacy instruction.

National Level

There is also a need to better understand the measures that schools use across our nation and how schools are accommodating to young children as they enter kindergarten. Another facet of this future research is to look at other states' schools to determine if there is consistency amongst administration and purposes of kindergarten screening processes. Since we already know that it is important to begin reading instruction upon entrance into kindergarten, it will be necessary to compare how states assess reading skills of young students and how the data are used to deliver rich literacy instruction. According to the Department of Education data elements, differences amongst content, standards and assessments across the states creates difficulty in comparing state reading proficiency achievement data across the nation. Therefore, it will be important to not only research what assessments are used to screen kindergarten children upon entrance into school but also what assessments are used to measure their reading proficiency by grades three and four.

With the variation in assessments administered, it will also be important to evaluate the various measures and determine what constitutes reading proficiency across statewide assessments. In addition, data can be further analyzed to determine how students whose kindergarten screening data are used to inform instruction at entrance into school can impact their achievement throughout their K-12 grade level span.

Conclusions

Kindergarten has changed from its original design of allowing students time to engage in social interactions, explore their environment, develop sensory and motor skills and adjust to a school setting. Kindergarten has now become the first step in developing proficient readers, especially in schools where students enter school with limited early literacy skill knowledge. Schools are under more pressure due to legislation and policy to produce proficient readers by grade three, therefore teachers and administrators acknowledge kindergarten as the crucial

beginning point in assessing young readers and preparing them for reading success by grade three. In order for schools to best equip young readers with the skills necessary to acquire proficiency, it is imperative that Indiana schools adopt research-based methods of assessing students' early literacy skill knowledge prior to formal reading instruction. Students who are instructed at their level of understanding upon entrance into kindergarten will make great gains and acquire literacy skills appropriate to their academic reading trajectory. In order for students to meet the goals set forth for them as directed by state policies and mandates, it is imperative that they are receive reading assessment and instruction upon entrance into formal school-kindergarten. As Clay (2001) points out, "it is possible to record children's attempts to engage in literacy processing from the time they enter school, irrespective of the types of programme being used, or the different competencies amongst school entrants, or the delivery systems designed by different teachers." Therefore, students are ready to read as they enter school at age five and should be assessed and instructed in reading, based upon their level upon immediate entrance to kindergarten.

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APPENDIX A

Qualtrics Web-Based Survey

Please see the attached link below to access the online survey via Qualtrics.
https://bsu.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_4VH5PTdBoELnzbD

You can also view the survey in its PDF format as provided below.

Study Title: "Ready or not": The Implications of Kindergarten Readiness Assessment Data on Classroom Reading Instruction
Principle Investigator: Holly Hullinger-Sirken

Study Purpose and Rationale:
Because of the focus on IREAD3 in Indiana and preparing young readers, it is important to focus on early literacy instruction currently present in today's schools. In order to produce proficient readers by grade three, it is critical to make instructional decisions based upon kindergarten screening data, at the beginning of formal school instruction.

This study will inform teachers and administrators about the varied kindergarten screening measures used today and how the data from these measures informs instruction. Not only will this study provide information regarding all Indiana schools, but it will also provide implications for what your school can do to prepare successful readers by grade three. With this information, an analysis of the best assessment measures to inform early literacy instruction will be examined.

Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria:
Principals and kindergarten teachers (ages 22-70) from all Indiana private and public elementary schools are included in this study to determine the current kindergarten screening processes used in all Indiana schools.

Participation Procedures and Duration:
For the electronic Qualtrics survey, you will proceed through the survey and answer the multiple choice and short answer questions. Once you complete the survey, you will submit it to the Qualtrics database. If you choose to submit your email address to receive results of the study, you may enter it at the end of the survey. The survey should take approximately 10 minutes.

Data Confidentiality:
The data will be confidential as the electronic survey system, Qualtrics, assigns a random code to the survey. Therefore, the only direct identification of participants in this study is if the participant willingly chooses to provide an email address at the end of the survey, indicating that he/she would like to receive the results of this study.
The email addresses will be kept in a separate confidential database in Qualtrics, which is only accessed by the username and password of the researcher's account within Qualtrics. Once the results have been sent, the database will be deleted.

Storage of Data:
The data will be stored within the Qualtrics database, where the researcher and the faculty advisor will have access to it. Qualtrics is only accessible through a username and password given to the researcher; therefore others will not have access to this data. Once the study is complete, the data will be erased from the database. Data will be stored and kept from the time survey

administration through the end of the study (July 2013). If the study requires more time, the data could be stored and kept through December 2013.

Risks or Discomforts:

There are no anticipated risks for participating in this study.

There are no anticipated risks for participating in this study.

Benefits:
The benefits of participating in this study are that it can provide you with information on how best to use kindergarten screening data to inform your classroom reading instruction.

Voluntary Participation:
Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. Please feel free to ask any questions of the investigator before signing this form and at any time during the study.

IRB Contact Information:
For questions about your rights as a research subject, please contact Director, Office of Research Integrity, Ball State University, Muncie, IN 47306, (765) 285-5070, irb@bsu.edu."

Study Title:
"Ready or not": The Implications of Kindergarten Readiness Assessment Data on Classroom Reading Instruction

Researcher Contact Information
Principal Investigator: Holly Hullinger-Sirken, Graduate Student Elementary Education
Ball State University
Muncie, IN 47306
Telephone: (260) 318-2736 hjhullinger@bsu.edu

I agree to participate.
I do not agree to participate.

Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Linda Martin Dr. Linda Martin

Elementary Education Ball State University

Muncie, IN 47306 Telephone: (765) 285-8552

lmartin@bsu.edu

Survey of Initial Kindergarten Assessment Use Within Classroom Instruction

A researcher at Ball State University is conducting a study to determine how data from kindergarten screening measures are used to inform the classroom instruction. Your school has been selected to participate in this brief survey. We appreciate you completing and returning the survey by May
9th. Although the name of the school is requested, all information will be kept confidential.

Click to write the question text

Name of School

Name of School District

School Enrollment (approximately)

Free/Reduced Lunch (%)

Please mark the appropriate box.

- Public School
- Private School

Choose a location that best describes your school.

- Urban (inner-city schools)
- Suburban (outside city schools)
- Rural (country schools)

Please identify the region within which your school is located (per the Education Service Center assigned to you by the Indiana Department of Education).

How many kindergarten classrooms are in your school?

Number of kindergarten classrooms in the school

Please identify which kindergarten programs are available at your school.

- ○ Half-Day Kindergarten only
- ○ Full-Day Kindergarten only
- ○ Half-Day kindergarten and Full-Day kindergarten

What is the state grade assigned to your school at this time?

Kindergarten demographics

	0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
Total number of students in kindergarten at your school											
Number of African American students in kindergarten											
Number of Hispanic students in kindergarten											
Number of Caucasian students in kindergarten											
Number of Asian students in kindergarten											
Number of Other students in kindergarten											

Please identify your gender.

- ◯ Male
- ◯ Female

Please identify your age.

- ◯ 21-30 years old
- ◯ 31-40 years old
- ◯ 41-50 years old
- ◯ 51-60 years old
- ◯ 60+ years old

Please identify your ethnicity.

- ◯ African American
- ◯ Hispanic
- ◯ Caucasian
- ◯ Asian
- ◯ Other (please specify below)

Please identify your marital status.

- ◯ Single
- ◯ Married
- ◯ Widowed
- ◯ Divorced/Separated

How many years of experience do you have teaching kindergarten at your current school?

What is your highest earned level of education?

What is your highest earned level of education?

Do you assess children's preparation or readiness for entering your kindergarten and school?

- Yes
- Not sure
- No

If students are absent from initial the initial kindergarten screening, are they then assessed upon entrance to school and if so, please indicate in the line below which assessments are administered.

- Yes
- No

Please identify what screening instruments you use to measure student readiness for Kindergarten (choose all that apply)? In the provided box below, please identify the number of years you have used this assessment.

- Dynamic Basic Indicators of Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS)
- Informal checklist (teacher-created, non-commercial)
- Bracken Basic Concepts Scale
- Other

When does your kindergarten screening assessment occur?

- Spring
- Summer
- Fall
- Winter

Who administers your kindergarten readiness screening instruments?

- Certified Staff Personnel (teachers, administrators, school psychologists, school counselors)
- Support Staff Personnel (Instructional assistants, title 1 teachers)
- Volunteers

If screening measures are administered, what does the screening data help you to determine (drag all items that apply to the box on the right):

Items	Screening assessments help us to determine:
Entrance into kindergarten	
Appropriate instruction for individual students	
At-risk for special education services	
Gifted and Talented Instruction	
Other: (drag over)	

Does your readiness assessment provide data to determine reading instruction?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

How useful do you think the assessment tools are in providing data from which to determine classroom reading instruction?

- ◯ Very Useless
- ◯ Useless
- ◯ Somewhat Useless
- ◯ Neutral
- ◯ Somewhat Useful
- ◯ Useful
- ◯ Very Useful

How do you determine reading instruction for individual students (check all that apply)?

- ☐ Beginning of the year screening data
- ☐ Progress monitoring data throughout the year
- ☐ Informal assessments (running records, anecdotal notes, checklists)
- ☐ Curriculum-provided tests, quizzes, worksheets
- ☐ Common core standards
- ☐ RISE evaluation purposeful planning objectives

Please identify which one you most commonly use to determine students' reading instruction at the beginning of the school year:

- ○ Kindergarten screening data
- ○ District/School report cards
- ○ Common Core standards
- ○ Commercial curriculum programs (i.e. Scott Foresman)
- ○ School-created curriculum maps, year-long plans

Describe how you use data from initial kindergarten screening measures to differentiate reading instruction for your students.

How satisfied are you (as teachers) with the results you get from the kindergarten screening instruments (e.g., DIBELS)?

Was this survey completed by the kindergarten teacher with the most years of experience within your grade level? If no, please specify in the blank who completed it (administrator, kindergarten teacher, other).

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

Your survey is almost complete. Please press the right arrow button now to submit your survey.

APPENDIX B

Survey Cover and Reminder Letters

Cover Letter
Holly J. Hullinger-Sirken

Dear Principal,

Reading Success Begins in Kindergarten

Please forward this survey to the kindergarten teacher in your building with the most years of kindergarten teaching experience. I appreciate you taking the time to complete this brief survey. When completing the survey, if you would like a copy of the results, be sure to submit your email address. If you have any questions, I can be reached at hjhullinger@bsu.edu

Because of the focus on **IREAD3** in **Indiana** and preparing young readers, it is important to focus on early literacy instruction currently present in today's schools. In order to produce proficient readers by grade three, it is critical to make instructional decisions based upon kindergarten screening data, at the beginning of formal school instruction.

This study will inform teachers and administrators about the varied kindergarten screening measures used today and how the data from these measures informs instruction. Not only will this study provide information regarding **all Indiana schools**, but it will also provide implications for what **your school** can do to prepare successful readers by grade three. With this information, an analysis of the best assessment measures to inform early literacy instruction will be examined.

Sincerely,

Holly J. Hullinger-Sirken

Survey Reminder Letter 1
REMINDER

Dear Principal,

Reading Success Begins in Kindergarten

One week ago, a survey was sent to you regarding the use of kindergarten-screening data and its importance to **classroom reading instruction**.

I realize that you are busy or may have misplaced the contact information to complete the survey for your school. Therefore, I am sending this reminder. Please forward this survey to the kindergarten teacher in your building with the most years of kindergarten teaching experience. When completing the survey, if you would like a copy of the results, be sure to submit your email address. I appreciate you taking the time to complete this brief survey. If you have any questions, I can be reached at hjhullinger@bsu.edu.

This information will be used to analyze what kindergarten screening measures **schools in Indiana** administer and how the data from these measures implicates for classroom reading instruction, specifically important due to **IREAD3**.

Sincerely,

Holly J. Hullinger-Sirken

Survey Reminder Letter 2
REMINDER

Dear Principal,

Reading Success Begins in Kindergarten

Two weeks ago, a survey was sent to you regarding the use of kindergarten-screening data and its importance to classroom reading instruction.

If you have already completed this survey, thank you. You may disregard the remainder of this message. If you have not, please continue reading to learn how you can complete the survey.

I realize that you are busy or may have misplaced the contact information to complete the survey for your school. Therefore, I am sending this reminder. Please forward this survey to the kindergarten teacher in your building with the most years of kindergarten teaching experience. When completing the survey, if you would like a copy of

the results, be sure to submit your email address. I appreciate you taking the time to complete this brief survey. If you have any questions, I can be reached at hjhullinger@bsu.edu.

This information will be used to analyze what kindergarten screening measures **schools in Indiana** administer and how the data from these measures implicates for classroom reading instruction.

Sincerely,

Holly J. Hullinger-Sirken

APPENDIX C

Survey Items Pertaining to Each Research Question

Research Question #1: *How Indiana schools assess students entering kindergarten.*	**Research Question #2:** *The screening measures administered in Indiana to assess early literacy skills*.	**Research Question #3:** *The information provided* from administration of the kindergarten screening measures.	**Research Question #4:** *Use the data* from kindergarten screening measures *to inform classroom reading instruction.*
Q. 16 Do you assess children's preparation or readiness for entering your kindergarten and school?	**Q. 18** Please identify what screening instruments you use to measure student readiness for Kindergarten? In the provided box below, please identify the number of years you have used this assessment.	**Q. 21** If screening measures are administered, what does the screening data help you to determine:	**Q. 23** How useful do you think the assessment tools are in providing data from which to determine classroom-reading instruction?
Q. 17 If students are absent from initial the initial kindergarten screening, are they then assessed upon entrance to school and if so, please indicate in the line below which assessments are administered.	**Q. 22** Does your readiness assessment provide data to determine reading instruction?	**Q. 25** Please identify which one you most commonly use to determine students' reading instruction at the beginning of the school year:	**Q. 26** Describe how you use data from initial kindergarten screening measures to differentiate reading instruction for your students.
Q. 18 Please identify what screening instruments you use to measure student readiness for Kindergarten? In the provided box below, please identify the number of years you have used this assessment.	**Q. 24** How do you determine reading instruction for individual students?	**Q. 27** How satisfied are you (as teachers) with the results you get from the kindergarten screening instruments (e.g., DIBELS)?	
Q. 19 When does your kindergarten screening assessment occur?			
Q. 20 Who administers your kindergarten readiness screening instruments?			

Survey Items Pertaining to School/Classroom and Teacher Demographic Information

School/ Classroom Demographics	Q. 2 **Name of School; Name of School District; School Enrollment; Percentage of Free/Reduced Lunch**	Q. **3 Private School or Public School**	Q. **4 Location of School (Urban, Suburban, Rural)**	Q. 5 **Location of School per Region of Indiana**	Q. 6 **Number of Kindergarten Classrooms within School**	Q. 7 **Half-day; Full-day; Both Half- and Full-day**	Q. 8 **State grade assigned to the school**	Q. 9 **Classroom Student Demographics**
Teacher Demographics	**Q. 10** Gender of Teacher	**Q. 11** Age of Teacher	**Q. 12** Ethnicity of Teacher	**Q. 13** Marital status of Teacher	**Q. 14** Teacher's years of experience teaching Kindergarten at that school	**Q. 15** Teacher's highest earned level of education		

APPENDIX D

Ability Grouping

- We use data to group students by ability and then plan for each group accordingly. Students can move within groups based on performance and progress monitoring.
- All students are placed according to their literacy levels whether they are high ability, essential skill or remediation groups.
- We ability group by the triangulation of assessment pieces.

Small Group Instruction

- The initial screening information helps me put students in groups.
- We look at the data given and then determine each child's literacy needs and place them in small group instruction.
- We use the data to place the children into groups for small group literacy instruction for our 90 min. reading block.
- Small group reading groups
- Drives our small groups and helps with a starting point for reading strategies
- mClass test for Beginning of the Year helps us figure out which groups they should be in for guided reading.
- We determine reading levels and group students accordingly for intervention, on-level, and high level groups.
- Use scores to divide class into into initial reading groups.
- Students can be grouped within the classroom according to skills they need to attain.
- We use initial assessments to determine reading level and readiness and determine students groups and interventions.
- Based on screenings children are placed into guided reading groups that meet on a daily basis. Also screening helps to determine which children need more help in the form of Title 1 services daily for reading instruction.
- small group instruction

Interventions

- We identify the most needy children and place them into a Title 1 program.
- Students are assigned learning paths and receive intervention according to the data.
- Intervention and other small groups
- Used for intervention groups based in areas of concern
- Students are divided into three groups for tier instruction. Struggling students are placed in small groups and provided additional support and opportunities within the classroom and in RTI groups throughout the day. Support staff (e.a.'s and special education resource teachers) push into the class to provide additional support through planning, team teaching, and working with small groups of students.
- Title I services
- Students who are not at benchmark receive additional instruction with teacher in small group, one on one with teaching assistant and with Title One certified teachers!

Developmental Assessment

- The kindergarten screening in the spring helps us to have an idea where the children are in their development.
- We use the letter ID portion as a big indicator of reading success
- The data we get from the screening is used to identify **those students who are ready** to start in learning the strategies for reading when the school year begins. We use this data

to group our students according to ability. Some of the students are not ready for reading and reading strategies, while others are. We groups these students according to ability to give them the instruction they need to become successful readers.

- I try to start children where they are. If they know alphabet they have lessons with word building, if not we have in depth lessons to help them catch up and get on track for reading.
- letter identification, **reading readiness** skills
- Distinguish between those who know the letters of the alphabet (percentage known), who knows letter sounds (percentage known), who knows one to one correspondence, direction.
- We administer the Brigance Screener at our kindergarten round up which is in the spring prior to the child coming to kindergarten. All children who did not go through round up are given the Brigance during their first week of kindergarten. We complete the Observation Survey (5 subtests-developed by Dr. Marie Clay-a Reading Recovery Assessment) as well as a DRA (Developmental Reading Assessment) on every child after the first 20 days of school to determine instructional level for reading. The first 20 days is a protected time to practice school procedures and routines and begin to build classroom culture. The Brigance does not provide reading information but does provide a score that helps us determine placement for high ability as well as alert us to keep a close watch for students who may be behind academically and require interventions. After they come to kindergarten we use other assessments to determine reading needs. We DO NOT use DIBELS and feel that the information we get from the Observation Survey is MUCH more reliable to determine what a child knows and where to begin their instruction. I would be happy to expand on why we do not use DIBELS and would hope this would NOT be considered as a required state assessment.
- We use the knowledge of letters and sounds plus concepts about print to determine the initial starting point. We also use text leveling to provide a benchmark starting point.
- Also, when a child passes all uppercase and lowercase letters and knows each sound, we put them in a take home reading series.
- Data from kindergarten screening measures provide us with information on a child's prereading skills. We then use this data to provide parents with ways to work with their children during the summer, it allows us to sort students into levels to provide more differentiated and individualized instruction.
- The screening gives us a baseline for basic information (i.e., letters known).
- Identify students for additional work on **readiness** skills.
- I try to start children where they are. If they know alphabet they have lessons with word building, if not we have in depth lessons to help them catch up and **get on track** for reading.
- We use the initial screening data to better understand their pre emerging literacy needs. Letter, sounds, cvc words, and some leveled readers will be on the screener.

Data NOT used for Reading Instruction

- Generally the data from initial kindergarten screening is not used to differentiate reading instruction. Instead, we use DIBELS, classroom assessments, and anecdotal notes from small group, and whole group instruction.
- The initial screening doesn't tell us much.
- No data is gathered at initial screening on reading skills. This is done at the beginning of the year with Dibels.
- We use data for classroom placement.
- We don’t use it for that.

- We don't really use that data except to create classroom lists. Our BOY DIBELS assessments are used to determine RTI groups and small groups within the core. Our PM throughout the year is used to change RTI and for creating BURST groups. Our classroom instruction is based on the assessments we give in addition to the CCSS.